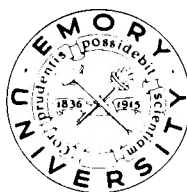


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THE  
LOST INHERITANCE.

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VOL. II.



THE  
LOST INHERITANCE.

A NOVEL.

Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife!

LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:  
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# THE LOST INHERITANCE.

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## CHAPTER I.

Painful indeed it is to be misunderstood, and undervalued by those we love. But this, too, in our life must we learn to bear without a murmur, for it is a tale oft repeated.

LONGFELLOW.

THE following morning Marion induced Adeline to sit with her in the drawing-room, in the secret hope of Captain Vernon's calling.

I have described this room before, when the warm summer sun beamed into it, and when the flowers clustered around the windows,



and wafted their fragrance within the shadowy outline of the lace draperies which fell across them. Now a blazing fire threw a warm, flickering gleam upon the carpet, the sofa was drawn up close beside it, and the directions of the tables and easy-chairs all showed a decided inclination had been manifested for the fire-side.

At last Marion heard a knock at the door, which Adeline fortunately did not perceive, as she was at the piano. She closed her book quietly, and left the room, thinking that it would be far better for no third person to be present during the approaching interview.

Adeline did not miss her, or notice, the noise which Vernon made in opening the door; but his footstep, as he entered the room, made her turn round. Vernon's heart beat rapidly, all his passionate love seemed throbbing within him as he gazed upon her; how he longed to press her to his breast! She rose quickly, and with a flushing cheek, stood to receive him.

"You have not quite forgotten your way

here, I see. Are you quite sure you have not made a mistake?" she asked.

The ardent expression of his eye darkened—a slight frown contracted his brow at this haughty reception from his idolized darling. He took her unoffered hand, saying :

"Adeline, dearest, what can you mean? what is the matter? why do you look at me in this way?"

"I think I ought to ask you a few questions, instead of your being surprised that I do not receive you as if I had seen you as usual. What have you been doing? who have you been with, that for nearly a fortnight you have kept away, and only sent me one hurried note?"

"I have much to tell you, Adeline. That my absence has been unavoidable, you might have been convinced; you little know how much self-denial I have been compelled to exercise to renounce the pleasure of your society."

"Nonsense! I am not so credulous as you may suppose. I have seen you driving about

town, which looked very like important business."

As she said this, she turned away from the piano, near which she had been standing, and seated herself on the sofa, pretending to engage herself with her crotchet-work.

"I cannot say anything to you, Adeline, if you persist in such unkind misinterpretations. You cannot look at me and assert that I have left you of my own free will!"

Adeline raised her head, and could scarcely resist the earnest expression of Vernon's eyes; however, she answered:

"Indeed. I am sure you could have come if you had liked, Fred."

There was a softening tone in her voice which made Vernon draw nearer to her, as he said gravely:

"I have had painful and anxious business to transact since I saw you last, and although it involved me in much uneasiness, I have finished it, little thinking to meet with reproaches from you, Adeline; for I hoped you would have wished to aid me in any duty which might be

required of me, not that you would make it still more difficult by your wilfully misunderstanding my motives."

Adeline was struck by Vernon's serious manner, and sat with her face bent over her work; she did not venture a reply. He continued:

"And then to doubt my affection, my love, which you know is entirely yours; you have done me great wrong, indeed."

Vernon's voice had such a tone of quivering emotion as he said the few last words, that the tears rushed into Adeline's eyes, which had such an imploring, beseeching expression as she looked up, that he was by her side in an instant. He took her hand in his, and as her tears fell upon it he asked:

"You will never doubt me again, my love, will you?"

"Forgive me, Fred, but if you knew how unhappy I have been, you would not be angry; it did seem so very long since you had been to see me."

He glided his arm round her, as he whispered fondly:

“Do you not think it was still more wearying to me, dearest? but I will explain the whole affair to you, and then you will see that I could not avoid my absence.”

“Nay, I do not want any explanation, Fred, I have you here again, and that is enough; I ought not to have my curiosity gratified, as a punishment for having\* been so foolish.”

“My love, I have no secrets from you, nor ever shall have; if I appear reserved you must always be sure that the affairs of others, not my own, prevent my telling you everything. And now confess, dearest, you have still a little desire to know the cause of my absence?”

Adeline smiled, and said:

“I should rather like to hear who the lady was with whom you were driving so comfortably the other day, for, notwithstanding all you say, I think I have a right to be jealous of her; for besides your absorbed look of interest, she was very pretty.”

Vernon was rejoiced to hear Adeline’s own merry voice again, and replied:

“She is pretty, certainly, but what can that be to me? you must never be jealous again, Adeline, it is paying yourself but a bad compliment besides doing me a great injustice; promise me you will never think of me again, as I am afraid you have been doing lately.”

“I will try not; but if you run away very often, I cannot engage to be always reasonable. It is all very well for you men to be hurt and annoyed if we unfortunate women dare to doubt your immaculate infallibility, to expect we are to let you roam about unquestioned as you are inclined, without venturing upon even a little bit of indignation; and yet, if you suspect us of indifference, what do you say then?”

“Oh! give us anything but indifference, love; your anxious watchfulness we like, but what I ask from you is to be merciful in your judgments, and generous in your surmises; to exercise a little trustful hope, and then I shall never again see such a frown on your brow, or such a curl on your lip, as you greeted me with this morning. Nay, do not put on that look



again, you will frighten me away," said Vernon, as Adeline tried to assume one of her haughty glances, but she could not efface the warm sunny light from her eye, or the newly returned happy smile which dimpled her mouth.

Vernon sat beside her, and began his story :

" When I left you last, dearest, I found a letter for me at the club, which had been waiting there for several days. It was from a great friend of mine in India, to say that his wife was compelled to return to England on business, and begging me to give her any assistance in my power. I found, on inquiry, that the packet which he named as the one in which she was to sail, had arrived some days. I did not know what to do. To delay seeing Mrs. Seaton, after her husband's letter, was impossible ; and yet what clue had I to find out her whereabouts ? I read the letter again, and was in despair until I found, close to the seal, a line or two written very small, which I had overlooked before, where the name of the hotel was mentioned where I should meet the lady. It was too late that

night to visit her, therefore as early the next morning as I thought I might present myself, I went to Montague Street, as Major Seaton had directed me.

“ I found her anxious and unhappy, and very unwell. She had suffered much during the voyage, and was so altered from the lovely woman I had seen as Seaton’s bride, in Madras, that I should have scarcely known her.

“ She then explained to me the business about which her husband had merely hinted.”

“ You need not tell me all the details, Fred, you know I never could understand such particulars ; the very name of business always frightens me.”

“ Yes, you like the beauties of life better than its stern realities, and I do not wonder at it,” said Vernon, as he gazed fondly upon her graceful and elegant figure, and upon her countenance, which was the very type of refinement in features, and of the expression of cultivated feelings, “ and I hope you may never have occasion to descend into the tumultuous arena of struggles ; but Mrs. Seaton was as averse to

such things as even you are, dearest; but love for her ailing husband has conquered all such fastidious disinclinations."

"Oh! for affection one may do much, but I do so hate that cold, stern word, duty—it seems like a cold, wintry day!"

"Nay, my Adeline, you must not say that, for often duties are imperative, when we have no love to lighten their irksomeness."

"Oh, yes! I know all that, Marion often talks about duties, but I always hope I shall never have any to perform except for those people I like very much, and then I shall not mind them."

"I do not think you have had any very heavy duties yet, darling, have you? Neither you nor I have tried that part of our fate; but if we may only be together, we shall not mind a few trials."

"I do not know, if you leave me to bear them alone, I shall not like them at all, Fred."

"You may feel quite sure I shall never willingly give you an opportunity of doing so; but I suppose your allusion to that is

a hint that I am to tell you about Mrs. Seaton?"

"I never heard you talk about them: I suppose you knew them in India?"

"Yes, Seaton was my captain when I first joined, and he proved a very kind friend, and just at that period of one's life, I assure you, a real friend is no trifling acquisition. When we went into action during the late campaign, Seaton distinguished himself extremely, and owing to death in the regiment, he obtained his promotion; he had married just before the war broke out, rather an imprudent step, for his wife had not a sixpence, and he was anything but well off; however, they listened to love rather than to caution, and if ever man could be excused for yielding to the influence of beauty, it was Seaton, for I seldom saw a lovelier creature than she was when he married her."

"I thought she was very pretty; you should have heard how Mr. Murray raved about her; and he had only a passing glimpse."

"But she is a mere shadow of what she was: all the rich colouring, and vivacity of her

countenance are gone. When I was wounded in our last engagement, Seaton was my nurse, and a most kind and judicious one,—he procured me every assistance : I verily believe I should have died had it not been for him. Just as I left India, he was laid up with a terrible fever, which seemed to prostrate him entirely, and his wife tells me he has never regained his former strength.

“They had not received their usual remittances from England, and had letters a few months ago to say that an agent who managed Seaton’s small property had been playing the rogue, and that unless speedy measures could be adopted, all must go to ruin. Seaton thought of applying for leave, but he found if he did so, it would materially injure his professional prospects, which would have been a great pity, after his service. The only plan then seemed to be, for Mrs. Seaton to come to England, and with her brother’s assistance, arrange matters in the best possible way.”

“What a long voyage to make about such a thing, could it not have been settled by writing ?”

“ It could not have been done so satisfactorily, and you must remember, dearest, that it was most important, that immediate and judicious measures should be taken, as Major Seaton’s whole fortune is involved in it, with the exception of his pay, and that of course, depends upon his life. He must have been very anxious about the position in which his wife would be placed, if anything should occur to him. She told me it seemed to weigh upon his mind so much, that she proposed leaving India ; of course he did not like the idea of parting with her, nor of her undertaking such a journey without him, however, it seemed the best thing ; —he wrote to me, because he knew I should remember them, and be glad to do anything to assist them.”

“ But how was it, Fred, that Mrs. Seaton did not apply to her brother for assistance and advice, rather than to you ? I think it would have been more consistent ? ”

“ My dear Adeline, the first newspaper she saw on landing contained the notice of his death, so that added to her anxiety, and the sorrow quite knocked her up for a few days—



she has no relations in town, so that she was thankful to avail herself of my escort and counsel. I cannot tell you the complicated accounts we have had to examine, the disagreeable discussions I have undergone, for she, poor thing, understands but little of such details. I have been closeted with the lawyers, I have rushed about town night and day, seeking for witnesses and documents; in fact, I have scarcely had one moment to myself."

"I am so sorry, Fred, that I was so unreasonable and foolish; but how could I imagine such things as these had detained you?"

"You might have guessed it was something unusual, love; but we will forget all that, and rub out the last fortnight's feelings, you must never have them back again. At last, all the arrangements were completed, and we have finally settled Seaton's affairs in a way which will, I hope, prevent any future annoyance to him."

"What has become of Mrs. Seaton, is she still in town?"

"No, I accompanied her part of her way

into Scotland, where she is going to stay a month with an old aunt, and then she will return to India without delay, for of course her husband is very anxious about her. I do not like the account she gives of him, I am afraid his health is quite broken up; I tell her she must persuade him to come here, for it is his only chance. Now, dearest, are you satisfied with this account of my proceedings?"

"I am only grieved at my own folly, if you love me, never remind me of it again. I hope you will soon see Major Seaton in this country, that he may take care of himself; for I suppose you will not be going to India again?"

"That is for you to decide, love. I shall never without you, unless you change your mind, and repent of your promises, and send me into banishment; for I am sure you would rather stay in England, than live in our Indian empire."

Adeline and Vernon sat chatting by the sparkling fire, forgetful of the rapidly passing time, until Marion entered the room, to ask

them if they were not ready for luncheon. One glance told her that all differences were at an end ; for the depressed, anxious look had vanished from Vernon's brow, and Adeline's bright smile had returned to her lips. Yet Marion wondered how they could laugh so merrily, and refer to their late misunderstanding with such mutual raillery, her sensitive nature would have shrunk from what would have seemed like desecration ; for in her high and lofty dreams of the love which endures, when all other things fail, she had thought of all selfishness being subdued, all evil passions being controlled, so that those who are bound together when on earth, may live together for ever through eternity.

She had suffered so much from minor evils, from daily irritations, and little, but often repeated faults of temper, from want of forbearance and sympathy, that in all her images of the future, these evils were banished, as the greatest disturbers of peace, and after all, peace is a great ingredient in pure, holy love. Let romances speak of the love which springs up with sudden impulse, from unlooked for circum-

stances, which is fostered by violence, and perfected amid scenes of tumult and excitement, but in the calmer yet more absorbing experiences of life, we shall see that the affection which will influence us for good through life, and after life, must be "pure as light, and peaceful as Immortality."

Alas ! alas ! that these things should be so seldom thought of, that we should rush on, careless and regardless of the undying influence of even the slightest trifle : that to amuse the passing hour should be but too often the only object with so many, when none can calculate how far the circles may extend which are caused upon the rippling surface of character, by what may appear of no moment.

Vernon and Adeline passed into the dining-room in high glee, and little thought that perhaps the memory of their disagreement might return to them in after years, and when separation or death was between them, might add to the bitterness of their reflections ; they forgot that each unkind thought and word facilitates the succession of others : all this was

unheeded, and as they gazed on each other, in the delight of reconciliation, in the charm of being again together, every other feeling was forgotten. The thunder cloud had passed, and the sweet flowers of life were raising their drooping heads, which had shrunk away from the fatal influence.

## CHAPTER II.

Were there nothing else  
For which to praise the heavens, but only love,  
That only love were cause enough for praise.

TENNYSON.

AFTER Vernon and Adeline's serious misunderstanding had been explained, they seemed to have banished all remembrance of it from their minds, and to have returned to their former mutual happiness ; yet a quick observer might have guessed that there had been some irritated feelings between them, from his excessive anxiety to avoid the slightest shadow of a word or look which could give her reason for annoyance, and by her unwillingness to claim such extreme deference. This shewed a consciousness of some



recent wound in the spirit, the tenderness of which might be revived without care. Adeline felt that she had wronged Vernon, and strove in every manner to show him that she deplored her injustice. What lovely flowers he used to bring to her when the spring had scarcely appeared; how he loved her smile of delight as she received them! Although he showered tokens of his affection upon her constantly, it gave him more pleasure to present these exquisite blossoms than the richest gems he could purchase—they seemed more fitted to her poetical beauty, more expressive of his love than the baubles of wealth and beauty.

The time for their marriage was rapidly approaching; the settlements—those rocks on which so many hopes of happiness are wrecked—were progressing favourably; the farewell parties, which friends seemed to consider it indispensable to give to those who are affianced, were nearly over. Mrs. Harcourt's visits to the milliners were now almost useless, so numerous had been her orders. Adeline interfered but little in these matters; after having insisted that everything should be simple though elegant, she

allowed her mother to amuse herself with the arrangements of her *trousseau*. She and Vernon often walked together, and when in-doors, the never-failing conversation of future plans, of past happiness, which so engrosses lovers, occupied them.

Stanley used to dine occasionally at the Harcourts, by Vernon's suggestion, as he always wanted to consult him about the merits of different counties for a residence, as he declared Arthur knew more about various country-houses than most men. On one of these friendly evenings, Stanley seated himself by Vernon, when the ladies left the dining-room, and said: "I have just heard from my father, that Fountain Court, about five miles from Langston, is to be let; the man to whom it belongs has been living very fast lately, and finds it necessary to retrench; I really think it would be just the place for you."

"Do you mean that fine old house surrounded by trees, where the river runs at the foot of the lawn?"

"Yes; you called there with me once, and were charmed with the park; there are some

good covers near, which have been very tolerably preserved ; I would give the thing a thought."

"My dear fellow, it is the very place I should have chosen, but I had no idea of the chance of its being in the market. I will speak to Adeline directly. Will the rent be within my mark, though?"

"Yes, just about what you proposed giving for that place in Somersetshire, and this is far better worth the money, for it is in very good condition."

Vernon went up stairs, and was soon deeply engaged in telling Adeline of the information he had just received. Stanley followed him to the drawing-room, and after a little chat with Mrs. Colston, who was there, he sat down by Marion, who was pouring out the coffee. She had been suffering from influenza, and looked rather pale and delicate ; she did not appear in a usual evening toilette, but in a kind of half-high dress, with that beautiful, rich, Spanish, black lace drawn over ; this was particularly becoming to her fair complexion and drooping ringlets, and she had seldom looked more inte-

resting than she did that evening, and so Stanley felt as he watched the gentle blush steal over her cheek as he approached her. He liked her much better in her present *négligée* style than as he generally saw her, for he fancied it had a more domestic appearance.

The Harcourts preserved the old-fashioned tea-table at which Marion generally presided, and on these winter evenings a social, merry party generally gathered round it. After tea, on the night I am speaking of, Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt, Mrs. Colston and I sat down to whist, while Mr. Colston amused himself by looking over our game. The young people were chatting and laughing together, until Adeline and Vernon adjourned to the piano; but they seemed to prefer conversing to singing, for very long intervals elapsed between the songs. Excellent opportunities for a little unreserved intercourse are afforded by the excuse of music! How many hurried words never to be forgotten, either by the speaker or the hearer, have been breathed between the verses of a song! A piano might relate many histories of explanations of trifling events which have, perhaps, decided

the fate of a life, which have taken place at its side ! How many can trace the very dawn of their passionate attachment to a tone or look which they have caught near some unconscious instrument, and how many hearts have ached from a slight which they have felt or fancied in the same position ?

Marion was sitting on a low couch with her work, and Stanley was near her talking, or sometimes listening to Adeline's music, in a kind of dreamy happiness. He mentioned the chance of Vernon's obtaining the lease of Fountain Court, and described its attractions.

"It is a lovely place," he said. "I am sure you would be pleased with it. I hope Vernon will decide to make an offer for it ; it should be done at once, as it is a thing likely to suit many people."

"I dare say he will write to-morrow ; for, if he has seen it and admires it, I am sure Adeline will be desirous to have it."

"It is so near Langston that I am selfishly anxious that Fred should live there ; it is so pleasant to have friendly neighbours in the country. My father will be delighted at the

chance of such a thing, for he is already in love with Adeline from Vernon's description: he will never be happy unless they are with him."

"Do you think a country life will suit Captain Vernon? Is he not fond of excitement and society?"

"Yes, he has been; but he is so very much in love that I think, at present, at all events a little ruralization will be very attractive, and the pursuits of a country gentleman will please him very well; he will make a very popular squire, and as there is a very good neighbourhood near Fountain Court, they need not live in anything like isolation unless they prefer it. I have faint visions of gay *fêtes* and balls there, under your sister's inspiring presence."

"I am glad they have decided on a country residence; I think it will be much better for Adeline, for, with her beauty and attractions, she would soon be a victim to society in town, for she does enter into its enjoyments most thoroughly. I cannot tell you how glad I am that she is likely to be removed from its influence."

“ You are afraid they would become a fashionable couple, spending all their time at balls and parties, without any quiet to improve their acquaintance with each other, and fatigued and languid the few hours they are away from the gay world ?”

“ You have guessed something of my anxiety, Mr. Stanley ; not but what I believe them to be most truly attached ; but a constant whirl of excitement and saturation of worldliness, if I may use such an expression, is but too apt to cast a shadow upon feelings which appear most true and the least liable to change.”

“ Yet, I would not advise young people to renounce society entirely, particularly if, like Vernon and your sister, they have been successful in it. Such sudden changes are seldom beneficial ; gradually the taste for it may vanish, and quieter, calmer pleasures, supersede its maddening, absorbing influence ; but, if seclusion be suddenly adopted and long persisted in, disgust invariably succeeds, and too often a second tide of devotion to vanity and frivolity flows which perhaps never ebbs until old age creeps on, and freezes up the means of enjoyment.”

“This is like one of your pictures, boldly sketched, but coloured with too heavy a hand ; however, you illustrate very forcibly, and I often find your descriptions recurring to me and haunting me like some dream. I am beginning to catch a gleam of light in decyphering your character, notwithstanding the pains you take to appear cynical and forbidding.”

A smile rested on Stanley's lips at this remark, which certainly could not be classed under either of these epithets ; it was so different from the cold sneer which usually relaxed his features, that his countenance seemed quite changed. As Marion spoke, her eyes met his, and their earnest gaze called the ready colour to her cheek, which deepened as he leant forward and said :

“Then you have confessed, Miss Harcourt, that you do take sufficient interest in me to endeavour to understand me. I am afraid you will find it a difficult task, for I often wonder if I comprehend myself. Will you promise not to give me up as not worth finding out ; and then perhaps the more you ponder over



my apparent incongruities, the less dissatisfied I shall be."

Marion tried to throw off the slight embarrassment which she felt, as she replied :

"I believe I am not readily discouraged in any pursuit to which I take a fancy, Mr. Stanley, and, as you are rather an enigma, I think I shall still endeavour to dissolve it ; though, with my trifling experience, I am afraid I shall be baffled."

A peculiar expression crossed Stanley's countenance as he answered, in a low and almost hesitating tone :

"I hope you will judge me leniently, and that you will believe me when I assure you, that the opinion you may form of me is of the deepest importance to my happiness."

Stanley was not a man who habitually paid compliments, or who indulged in hackneyed pretty speeches ; therefore, these few words, uttered in those earnest tones which so seldom fell from his lips, vibrated to Marion's inmost soul. She did not look up, and he turned away and joined Adeline at the piano. She

was singing ; but though her voice was even sweeter than usual, and was pouring forth one of the few ballads which Stanley had ever liked, he stood beside her, perfectly unconscious of the sounds which were enchanting Vernon.

He had never allowed himself to express to Marion much idea of his feelings for her, before that evening ; and the look which his few words had called to her countenance, made his heart beat wildly with the hope that she was not indifferent to him.

Stanley's character was changing under the influence of the increasing ardour of a new emotion. Marion's gentleness and purity harmonized with requisitions he had mentally drawn as the indispensable attributes of the being he could love ; and her sincerity and high-mindedness disarmed his mistrust and suspicions. Not that he fancied her " too good for human nature's daily food ;" she was no abstraction of perfection, no statue of theoretical goodness—but a warm-hearted, deep-feeling woman, with sufficiently good taste to be interested about himself ; which trait certainly did not depreciate her in Stanley's opinion,

for however lovely, however fascinating a woman may be, she will excite no warmer feeling than admiration in such a man as our hero, if she appear totally unconscious or indifferent to his own claims to consideration.

Marion's timid glance towards him, as he stood near Adeline, and the vivid blush which rushed to her cheek as she met his gaze, sent his imagination on rosy wings into cloud-land, there to dream of the future, until Adeline roused him from his reverie, by addressing him on the subject of Fountain Court.

"Frederic gives me a most eloquent account of the beauty and capabilities of this place you advise his taking," she said; "I hope you have not been colouring your description with a partial hand, for I'm afraid I shall expect much, after what I have heard to-night."

"I do not think there is much chance of your being disappointed; for if all that is lovely in nature, or elegant in design, can satisfy you, I am sure you will not complain of my having recommended Vernon to think of Fountain Court."

"I do not know how I shall like living in

the country, after all, Mr. Stanley ; but Fred seems to consider it quite as a matter of course, and builds such pretty castles in the air, that I do not like to hint that I do not anticipate such delight from solitude."

"Nay, if you doubt being pleased with a country life, you should give Vernon some idea of your wishes, before he decides anything. You know, he is only desirous of gratifying you ; and I confess that, as far as I can judge, I should consider it far better for both of you that you should avoid the crowd and whirl of society ; but mine can be but a superficial opinion. Has Vernon told you that there are some pleasant people in the neighbourhood ? so that you need not be reduced to be more domestic than you like, from the mere want of anything to interest you."

Adeline looked rather hurt at this touch of Stanley's sarcasm ; and there was a slight tinge of acrimony in her manner, as she replied :

" I am not afraid of becoming wearied of Fred's society, as you seem to imagine ; nor do I expect to pine for excitement ; but I do not feel quite inclined to play the country lady.

Mere caprice, you will say ; and perhaps that would be the most correct definition you could give of me."

"And of most of your sex, I believe. You never seem to know your own minds, or if you do, there is always some lurking plot in the back-ground, which mars everything. If you really dislike the plan of living out of town, why not say so at once, instead of acquiescing in Vernon's views now, just to cause him regret hereafter."

"And suppose, in reality, that I feel these views will conduce most to our happiness, am I still to tell him every crotchet which touches me, and confess every varying fancy which influences me? You know nothing about us women, Mr. Stanley, whatever acquaintance with our character you may boast of, if you think we decide upon a line of conduct, and have no little side-winds to change the current. You would not like us to be such quiet, imperturbable beings. I know you have but a very mediocre opinion of me, and I dare say you pity Fred in your heart for having made such a foolish engagement ; but wait and see,

and if his experience does not influence you to give up some of your misanthropical, distrustful feelings, I shall be much disappointed."

"You are much mistaken, if you really think that I do not cordially congratulate Vernon on his good fortune. His prospects for happiness seem very bright, and I sincerely hope that all may prove as successful as you can anticipate; but I fear that I shall not much alter my own estimation of things. I raise my expectations and requirements so high, that I cannot realize them; and then I quarrel with the world, and my friends, and myself."

"But that is a pity, Mr. Stanley. You should not grasp at so much, and then you might be more easily satisfied. Would not affection—real, undivided affection—enhance your happiness unimaginably? Would not sympathy soften your annoyances? And yet you throw by all this, remorselessly, for some reasons known only to yourself."

Adeline was approaching the citadel of Stanley's feelings, and as he was not inclined to

open it for her inspection, he replied, in a mocking, laughing tone,

“Just now you are a partial judge in such matters. I dare say real affection is a pleasant thing to receive, provided the article be genuine ; but as that must always be the uncertainty, I think it more prudent to avoid the chance of a counterfeit.”

“I do not despair of seeing you fairly caught yet, notwithstanding your wonderful prudence and impenetrability ; not that I should be at all inclined to envy your ladye-love, for I am almost sure you would play the tyrant.”

“That, almost, has saved you from having mortally offended me ! It just makes the difference between accusing a man of determination to carry out what he thinks right, and imbecile obstinacy and unmanly temper.”

“Nay, I did not think of such censure for a moment.”

“I am sure you did not, or you would never have said it ; for I do not believe it is your plan to say rude things, as many young ladies do, how I hate the general style of woman’s con-

versation! Forced gaiety, empty wit, or affected sentiment. Why cannot people say what they really think, then we might have a chance of appreciating character in society."

"Nonsense, do not wish people to be different to what they are and will be. How do you know they ever think at all? You must not expect to add to your real experiences in mixed society."

"I must not expect much sympathy in my quarrels with the world from you just now, I know. I hope you may never have reason to be less satisfied with it."

"They have finished their whist, I wonder who is the vanquished party, I must go and ask Mr. Courtenay about his game."

Adeline came to us, and laughingly entered into the accounts of our luck and success. I glanced at the young people. Vernon was talking to Marion with animation and interest, though his frequent glance at Adeline told me his thoughts were with her. There was a subdued, tender look in Marion's eyes, though it was dreamy, seemingly half unconscious of the present, which I had never seen in them



before, she was feeling the gentle influence of those emotions which make a woman of her disposition silent and thoughtful. For love to her was not merely a passion, ardent and engrossing, it was an imagination, tinging all with its unearthly loveliness, it was a complete abnegation of self, a merging of her own individuality into that of another: then what marvel was it that her countenance wore an expression of spirituality, that a soft shadow of melancholy dimmed her eyes, as her old feelings passed away, and the high responsibilities, and undying strength of woman's devotion arose within her?

Stanley was turning over some engravings with an air of careless indifference—his eye rested on Marion, and a stranger might then have discovered the secret of his heart, from the lingering tenderness of his glance. He could watch her as she conversed with Vernon, and admire her countenance in its varying lights and shadows, without feeling that undefined jealousy, which would certainly have crept over him, had he seen her with any one else in such animated conversation. Adeline was soon on

the sofa beside Marion, and all Vernon's smiles were for her ; Stanley did not join the trio, but began a lengthened argument with Mr. Harcourt on some trial in which he had been engaged all day.

How differently he looked when discussing such a subject, and immersed in the struggles and disputes of the world ! How brilliantly he illustrated his principles, how acutely he reasoned the arguments of the case, and as I listened, I felt that I should be sorry to have any interest in a question in which he was my opponent.

Marion's attention was riveted on Stanley, and although he was turned from her, she did not lose a word of that peculiarly thrilling voice in which he spoke. We at last began to think of separating ; Vernon most unwillingly heard the lateness of the hour, and seemed to have innumerable last words ; oh ! the unfailing eloquence of lovers ! Stanley feeling he had broken the ice of reserve between himself and Marion, was unwilling to disturb the ideas of happiness which her blush had called up early in the evening ; he dreaded approaching her with the common-place remarks of parting, yet he

could but follow Vernon and take leave ; but what meaning may be infused into a few words, and every-day action ! The tone in which he murmured his farewell, and the pressure of her hand, told Marion that he loved her ; and with a strange light in her eyes, and a bright flush on her cheek, she sought her own room, and few had lovelier visions of the future than gladdened her fancy that night, before the downy pinions of sleep closed around her, and wafted her into the glowing regions of dream land.

## CHAPTER III.

For I would love thee better still,  
Soothe thee in sorrow, guard from ill ;  
Would cherish thee each passing hour  
As the sun cherishes the flower,  
Whose ceaseless, gladdening sunbeams play  
Around it through the livelong day.

It was a mild, soft, spring morning, with the sun-light streaming gladly through the fleecy clouds on the day which was fixed for Adeline's wedding. When I reached the Harcourts' house, I found no one had arrived but the Colstons, but very soon others came in, the Brandons among the earliest, for they, with Marion were to officiate as bridesmaids. The tables were ornamented with lovely flowers,

arranged with exquisite taste, a few tiny rosettes of white satin were on a sofa, as if carelessly thrown aside. Marion greeted us all, and turning to the Brandons said :

“Would you like to see Adeline before we go? She is quite ready, but do not stay long, for she is rather excited and nervous.”

“We must exercise our privilege of superintending the toilette,” answered Lucy, with a smile, “although of course it is but a sinecure,” and thus saying they left the room. They soon returned, and in answer to Mrs. Colston’s queries about Adeline, could not avoid a few words in praise of her appearance, although they were young ladies who seldom admit the beauty of another. We soon took our places in the different carriages, and drove to the church, assembling in the vestry to wait for Adeline. Captain Vernon and Stanley were there before us ; the former looked bright and happy, just as a bridegroom should on his marriage morning : before we had all exchanged greetings, Mr. Harcourt entered with his daughter on his arm. Vernon gazed on her with such heartfelt affection as he pressed her

hand, that it should have re-assured her agitated feelings.

We then left the vestry in the most approved order, Captain Vernon offered his arm to Mrs. Harcourt, and walked in first, the bridesmaids followed; I saw Stanley was at Marion's side, then last came the lovely bride.

I cannot describe how beautiful she looked, in her flowing snowy robes, with the drooping veil dimming the outline of her most graceful figure, and the wreath of the pale fragrant orange-flowers upon her brow. Her colour varied, and her eyes were bent upon her bouquet which Vernon had sent her that morning; she took her place before the altar, her four bridesmaids standing near her, the delicate tint of their pale sea-green dresses contrasting with the deeper hues of the more matronly costumes near them, and with the pure, colourless drapery of the bride.

To me there is something most solemn and touching in the marriage service. Old man as I am, I can never gaze upon two beings plighting their faith "for better and for worse" without feeling a tear in my eye. The dim

shadow of the future seems to hover over them, with all its unknown destinies of good and evil, the joys and griefs of life mingled like the sun-light and shower in the many-tinted rainbow scene surrounding them; and as if to remind them of the transitoriness of life and its enjoyments, they plight their troth, until death do them part. That mystery of our being, Death, asserts its power even at this highest rite of human love and happiness, for while the bridegroom clasps the throbbing hand of his trembling bride, he is reminded that they will be parted hereafter, though but for a brief period. Then the vows of mutual love and truth which should bind them for ever, the immutability of these ties, the responsibilities they entail, the tenderness, the forbearance indispensable for their fulfilment, all crowd upon me, with the sickening fear that all this is too lightly entered upon, the miserable doubts whether these solemn engagements will be kept in the spirit as well as in the letter.

Captain Vernon pronounced his responses with a firm and manly tone, but Adeline's voice trembled so that I could with difficulty

hear it, she seemed excited and nervous ; and exquisitely lovely as she looked, I could have wished to have seen an expression of greater calmness and seriousness upon her brow. Marion was evidently deeply impressed with the ceremony, but although I could observe the lace of her mantle tremble from the pulsation of her heart, she stood tranquilly still, her cheek rather paler than usual. Stanley's eye was bent on her, and a flush was on his brow which I had never seen before, and an expression of loftier, higher interest than general in his eye. He and Marion evidently felt the real importance of the service for more than any of the party ; with them it bore the character of an event which stamps a life with a new impress, and if I guessed aright, they both felt a secret misgiving whether the bride and bridegroom felt the responsibility which the words they were uttering implied.

The last words of the exhortation were spoken, and the blessing upon the newly united couple was pronounced, they knelt for a few minutes together, and then after a few whispered congratulations we returned to the



vestry, for the necessary signatures of the registers. This finished, Vernon handed his bride into the carriage, and dashing down the blinds, they drove off, and we all quickly followed. A few more friends joined us for breakfast, which was soon announced, and as we assembled round the table, it would have been difficult to have found a happier wedding party. For notwithstanding the traditional joyousness which is considered inherent to such occasions, to me there always appears a reserve, a gloom which is difficult to be thrown off. The principal actors on the scene are feeling too much to be able to enter cordially into merriment, and there is so much curiosity to note their movements in the spectators, that they forget to entertain one another. Then some who have played a similar part in years gone by, are recalling that day, and remember disappointments and sorrows which have faded the brightness of the hopes they then indulged ; the one perhaps in thinking of the grave which has ingulphed the being to whom he was united by the solemn words that have sounded on his ear that morning, and some of the

young are dreaming of a time when they may be similarly engaged, and are weaving fancies bright and glowing as the spring sunbeams, which are glowing on the flowers and fruit on the table.

No! a wedding excites too many of our deepest feelings and tenderest sympathies, ever to be a really merry event. It is even more touching than a funeral; for then, though we may feel a poignant sorrow, there is a tenderness in regret for one we have lost for this life, which, with those high hopes of immortality that are brought before us, soothe and console—we feel a touch of spirituality warm us at the tomb; but at the altar, the spring of our human passions—the inmost fibre of our being is touched; the secret of our life, the fountain which has made our existence a paradise blooming with love, or a desert corroded with bitterness is brought vividly before us. Then why should we strive to make our marriage, occasions for mere worldly festivity; why indulge in the vanity and extravagance which is so usual?

Notwithstanding the compliments and inuendos, the wit and the smiles which were nume-

rous at the breakfast, Marion was grave, if not sad; but then she was about to part with her sister, and this might account for her pre-occupation: how fondly she gazed on Adeline, who, serene in her excessive loveliness, was receiving the homage which was offered to her charms and position, with almost haughty indifference. Stanley, instead of seizing such an opportunity as a wedding for indulging his sarcasm, and expressing his doubts of poor human nature, was unusually quiet, although an occasional sneer curled his lip, as some of the nonsense which his neighbour Lucy Brandon was talking to her cavalier, reached him. He took up Marion's bouquet which lay beside her, and in his absence of mind began to play rather roughly with the delicate petals. When she noticed this, she said—

“Have a little mercy on my flowers, Mr. Stanley, they cannot have offended you. I know you look rather harshly on mere ornamental affairs, but flowers are too precious to be victims of wanton destruction.”

“A thousand pardons; I assure you it was complete inadvertence which made me so mis-

chievous ; and as to my despising flowers, you might as well say I despised you women, for you always seem related,—first cousins at least.”

“ And do you not ? At all events you don’t doubt our capabilities of lasting feelings, constancy of purpose ; and this is very like scorning us.”

“ I never said this of you alone, for I fancy in such things men are equally deficient ; however I think I am not quite so sceptical as I was in your favourite doctrines ; at least if my suspicions return I shall be very miserable.”

“ They will not if you do not encourage them ; to-day, of all times, do not recur to them. Let me dream on in my own way, of the unchanging power of affection, and of its eternal influence.”

“ I am so far a convert to your views, Miss Harcourt, as to believe such love may exist, but that it is very difficult to meet with ; therefore it is far wiser not to make it a part of one’s ingredients of happiness.”

“ You are improving, certainly ; but I do not think you yet believe in the reality of an affection,

which would forget itself and submit to any sacrifice for the happiness of the loved one—tell me candidly?”

“You are very exacting: no, I have not made that discovery yet; at least I have not *proved* it. I have dreamed of it, and longed for it for years; but experience—bitter experience! You little know how that obliterates one’s romance! But you look sorrowful; nay, that is not the right expression for the defender and supporter of a theory which would sweeten all our sufferings!”

Well might Stanley rally Marion, for her eyes looked too bright to be unsuspected of a floating tear; however she replied with her gentle smile—

“Firmly convinced, as I may be, of the existence of the feelings I describe to you, that terrible experience of yours will sometimes throw a shadow over my imaginings, for I know how ignorant I am of the world; yet you wonder at my feeling sad when I think of the misery which must ensue if we lose faith in the best emotions of the heart.”

“If I were inclined to quarrel with your

representations, I should only have to ask you to select among your acquaintance for a few examples of this much-to-be-desired felicity. I know you would hesitate long before you could name more than perhaps two out of the number. You must not expect to meet with such good, lovely feelings as your own, or you will be sadly disappointed."

"I will not discuss this with you any more to-day. Let me believe in any theory, as you call it, a little longer; do not make life merely a hard struggle without any cordial, a desert without any verdure; because you have been unfortunate in your experiences, do not condemn me to the same."

"Believe me, rather than do this, I would throw myself upon your mercy, and entreat to be initiated into your belief; do you think I should be a very unteachable pupil? I will confess I am more than half under your dominion already."

This insinuation called the faint blush to Marion's cheek, as Stanley hoped it would do; but the departure of the ladies from the dining-room prevented her making any reply.

Adeline went to her room, to change her bridal attire for one more suitable for travelling. The Brandons had found plenty of employment in talking and laughing with the gentlemen of the party, and evidently enjoyed the distinction which their office gave them ; I remarked that they had not been particularly anxious to render any attentions to the bride ; they were conscious how completely her beauty eclipsed their own, and although glad that the event of the day placed her in a position where she would no longer clash with their own prospects, they still deemed it expedient not to place themselves in very close contact with her. When we gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, Marion was not there, but she soon reappeared ; and I guessed that she had been taking leave of Adeline, anxious to avoid anything like a scene before us all. Mrs. Harcourt soon vanished for a few moments, and in her absence the carriage drove round ; the balcony was soon filled with the guests, who were glad of any new object of interest, and the travelling equipage is always a subject for observation. Few would have found fault with the plain dark chariot, its wheels deli-

cately picked out with white, and the falcon, the crest of the Vernons, minutely painted on the panels; nor with the four spirited grey horses which stood pawing the ground. The imperial was soon strapped on, carpet-bag and hat-box arranged in their respective places; then the servants ascended the rumble, Adeline's shawl and dressing-case were put inside, and now that there was nothing to amuse the company, they returned to the drawing-room, expecting Adeline to appear.

In a few minutes she entered, leaning on her father's arm; she bade her friends farewell with that grace which never forsook her, and after one embrace from her mother and a fervent kiss from Marion, she left the room with Captain Vernon. Marion did not attempt to watch her drive away; she stood silently near the table, apparently slightly altering the flowers which were on it, and struggling for composure; Stanley was gazing earnestly upon her, and carefully diverted attention from her for a few moments, until she looked up and entered into conversation again.

But now we were all hastening to depart;



Mrs. Colston insisted upon Marion spending the rest of the day with her, knowing how she would miss her sister. For it is not the moment of parting, bitter though it be, which is most trying, but the dreary blank, the cold desolation which remains when we awake from any excitement and find ourselves separated from one we love most truly. Every trivial occurrence recalls our loss, and the more we strive to banish it from our thoughts, the more bitterly will it realize itself to us at times, as if to revenge itself upon our seeming carelessness or indifference.

But with all Marion's sorrow for the departure of Adeline, was mingled the satisfaction of knowing that there was every chance for her happiness; and most sincerely did she rejoice in her prospects, and wish her every blessing that could be showered upon a mortal being. Marion gladly accepted Mrs. Colston's proposal of accompanying her home; Stanley handed them to the carriage, not without a secret hope that he might be invited to join them at dinner, but he was disappointed, for even had Mrs. Colston thought there was a chance of his being disengaged at

such a short notice, she would, in kind consideration for the excitement which Marion had experienced in the morning, have condemned her to a quiet *tête-à-tête* with her in the evening. She certainly was not aware of the great pleasure of which she was thus quietly depriving Stanley, or her good-nature might have made her consider a cure for pale cheeks and weariness might be found in other means than calm and solitude.

However, she drove off with her young favourite, smiling on Stanley as he bowed his farewell. As my route happened to be the same as his for some distance, we walked together, chatting over the events of the morning.

“Well, Mr. Stanley,” I said, “such affairs as these make an old bachelor like me feel rather peculiar! half sorry and half glad—rather regretting to have lost some of the sweets of life, for it is not pleasant to see oneself advancing rapidly towards the end of our pilgrimage, without having a person who cares very much about us.”

“ Ah ! but think how many disagreeables you have escaped ! You have been free to go where you like, to do as you pleased, and, after all, there is a great charm in this independence ; how would you have managed your rambles on the continent, if you had had a delicate wife and numerous junior branches in your train, or, still worse, if you had left them behind, and found heart-breaking epistles, reproaching you for your vagrant disposition and protracted absence, awaiting you at every post ? Have you a weakness for a good cigar ? do you appreciate all the delight, all the comfort of smoking ? if so, you have an additional cause for thanksgiving on your freedom from household bondage, for almost all the women have an inborn horror of the fragrant weed, and think it one of their most imperative duties to discourage our indulging in its sweet influence.”

“ I am afraid I cannot derive much consolation from this topic, for I seldom avail myself of my many opportunities of smoking, nor do I think it would be at all a compensation for all the numberless pleasures of home.”

“ But you forget that, although you have lost some happiness, you have also been spared the chance of much misery ; think of the despair of finding the object of your love unworthy of you, imagine the agony of her affection being changed, remember the certain chill and shadow which time casts over the warmest feelings, and even if, by better fortune than falls to most men, you had been spared all this wretchedness, would you not have trembled lest any blast should have blighted her, any accident taken her away, would not death have stood as a kind of warning between you and her ? Believe me, the more enjoyments we possess, the more bitter are the counterbalancing evils.”

“ Yet how many risk encountering them and are happy : I think you refine too much upon your views of life ; you are making a theory of your own, and while you are expecting it to work itself out, you are subsisting on shadows, on mere smoke.”

“ Well, if the smoke be as agreeable as what I generally indulge in, I shall not quarrel with it, for when it evaporates it is easily renewed, which

is more than I can say of the more substantial realities which seem to engross most of us."

"Notwithstanding your care-for-nothing principles, I still think our friend the Captain, a very lucky fellow."

"That remains to be proved, certainly all looks right at present, and he has my best hopes that nothing may ever darken his fate. He has done better than might have been expected with his susceptibility to young ladies' attractions ; some people pretended to be surprised at his marrying so soon after his return from India ; I confess, I had expected by this time to have assisted in the catastrophe of to-day."

"I dare say you think him very much to be envied : come, confess such a human weakness !"

"Envy Vernon ! on my life, no—I never thought of that, I have no lingering desire to be in his place ; I should always be afraid of not admiring my wife as much as her excessive beauty deserved, besides, my poor matter-of-

fact eyes would be quite dazzled by such brightness; and, as you well know, there is no weariness equal to that of being satiated by perfection."

"It is something that you will allow Adeline is perfection! I do not suppose the Captain will quarrel with the definition. Here I am at my journey's end; you are for the club I suppose?"

"Yes, I am making holiday this morning, and I do not think I shall go to chambers before dinner; I must afterwards, as I know I have a consultation to-night. I shall not forget to drink the bride and bridegroom's health. Good-bye."

Stanley had to write to his father to give some instructions about Fountain Court, which Vernon had succeeded in securing, and where he expected to accompany Adeline after the honeymoon. Stanley had been indefatigable in arranging and facilitating Vernon's plans, he was really delighted at the prospect of having him so near Langston, and perhaps the probability of Marion being with her sister oc-

casionally, influenced him more than he might choose to acknowledge, at all events the idea had occurred to him, and so pleasant was it, that it was not very speedily banished.

## CHAPTER IV.

Passion, feeling, may be popular, but reason will be the possession of the few.

GOETHE.

For human hearts where'er they breathe,  
Have still their human charms for me ;  
I would not bind a selfish wreath  
Without one bud of sympathy.

ROBERT MONTGOMERY.

“HAS any one seen Murray to-day ?” asked Stanley at the club one evening, about a fortnight after Adeline’s marriage.

“No, he has disappeared for some time, without leaving directions for forwarding his letters, or the slightest clue of his whereabouts ; I wonder what wild-goose chase he is after



now! He certainly is of a most erratic, desultory disposition: do you remember his expedition to Norway, and his wanderings in the East? I am sure he has qualified himself for the 'Travellers' better than most men. Here comes Warrenne, if any one is likely to know where Edward is, he is the man. How are you, old fellow; Stanley is inquiring for our romantic wanderer, our dreaming, unaccountable Murray, where was he last heard of?"

"I can't remember, upon my honour; he has been *perdu* for some time, rather unusual too at this season; what has driven him to desperation?"

"Another disappointment perhaps," said Du Bois, the young man who had been talking to Stanley; "don't you remember how he rushed away after that fair-haired little coquette, Theresa Digby, was married?"

"By George, now you speak of that," exclaimed Warrenne, "I saw Miss Harcourt's marriage in the paper a week or two ago—she was a great pet of Murray's. I really believe he was very far gone about her, you may depend upon it, he fancied himself sadly ill-used because

she fell in love with that dashing young Vernon, instead of properly appreciating his own unspeakable attractions. Poor Murray, he seems doomed to be unfortunate with the ladies, although he is such a devoted cavalier."

As Stanley did not seem likely to gain any information about Edward, he lounged off to the library, leaving his two gossiping friends to dissect their absent ally at their leisure.

"Was this Miss Harcourt so very beautiful, Warenne?" asked Du Bois. "I never saw her, but many fellows used to rave about her."

"And with very good reason: she was magnificent, a grand word you will say, but not a bit too much so for her. I often used to meet her, but it was a difficult thing to get a dance with her, one had to wait nearly a dozen before she was disengaged; there was the least possible shade of hauteur about her, which I did not dislike, but I have heard her abused for it, by Stanley, among others."

"As for him, he finds fault with all the women; I never listen to his opinion, for if I did I should never like any one. He is a capi-

tal fellow ; but he is too severe, no one can suit him, and yet he is decidedly successful in society.”

“ It is that very success which makes him so difficult to be pleased ; he is absolutely jealous of himself ; take away his advantages of position, leave him only his talents and energy, and he would be much happier, he would then think he was valued for himself, not courted for his accidental qualifications.”

“ I dare say he is right in principle ; but he must find it a great bore to be always hunting up people’s motives ; he is too suspicious, really. I would much rather have my own insignificant fortune and capabilities for enjoyment, than his brilliant prospects and cold-heartedness.”

“ As to his being cold-hearted, I am not quite convinced of the truth of that ; I know it is the character he bears. Lady Meldon once called him a diamond, bright, cold, and colourless ; but I imagine these attributes depend upon the surrounding atmosphere. I very much suspect certain influences would render him rather the reverse of her Ladyship’s second epithet ;

he is not incapable of sensations like the rest of us, though quite unlike us, he has the power of reining in his feelings, and of saying 'thus far shall they go and no further.' "

"Why, Warenne, by what secret have you gained such an insight into that mocking, impenetrable fellow? But it is all moonshine, you may depend; ambition is his mistress, he has chosen her engrossing, maddening service; he will never bow to any other, until, perhaps, he has gained all he hopes from her hand, and then possibly, he may deign to stoop for the everyday happiness of life."

"It may be so; but I doubt. I think he begins to find out that his dear friend, Vernon, has not only married into a most fascinating family, but that he has not selected the most charming daughter; but of course this is only a conjecture of mine, therefore, pray do not put Stanley down as a doomed man; it was but the changed expression of his countenance, and the altered tone of his voice, last night when he was talking to Miss Harcourt, which made me suspect him of such a weakness, and he is sure to

quarrel with her sentiments, or manners, or something before long."

"Well, you know him better than I do ; if ever I hear of his engagement, I shall always think of this discussion we have had upon his organization. I am off to Pinkerton's, will you come ?"

"All right, have you your cigar-case ? I have left mine at my rooms ; here is your hat, come along."

Stanley was lounging in the library with several books near him as usual ; he had just thrown aside Dugald Stewart's 'Philosophy of the Human Mind,' and was now deeply interested in a novel. This was strictly in accordance with Arthur's character, now engaged in the most abstract arguments, in stern intellectual pursuits, and now exciting his imagination and indulging his feelings in dreams and fancies of happiness. Stanley possessed, essentially, two natures, and this was what made him so misunderstood. How often is this the case ? how difficult it is to comprehend our own complicated being ? how intricate are the sources of our emotions, and the

motives of our actions? then can we wonder at the numerous mistakes, the false interpretations which others put upon our actions, when we, who have the advantage of tracing our thoughts, and of analysing our sensations, are so frequently deceived? How can we feel hurt and angry when we are not appreciated, while there is a thick veil of reserve and conventionalities which few can penetrate? There is a fascinating interest in endeavouring to solve the mysteries which are involved in our intellectual nature, in the connection between our will and our emotions, between our reason and our fancy, in all those subtle distinctions which we have agreed to call metaphysics. Yet how wide must be the field for such inquiries, when such different views have been taken of it, and such adverse explanations given, and still the subject is unexhausted—for the soul of man is immortal, his spiritual nature is eternal—then how vast must be his capabilities, and how inexplicable his organization?

Stanley was rather fond of these speculative studies; but this evening he found he could not command his attention, as well as usual, to mas-

ter their intricacies, therefore he had taken up one of the novels of the day, and was absorbed in the fate of the hero, when he felt some one's hand upon his shoulder—he turned and saw Murray.

“ Ah ! Edward, where did you spring from ? We have all been tantalizing our imaginations about you—endeavouring to assign some reasonable cause for your absence.”

“ No one could discover the right one, I'll bet, for I do not know it myself. But is it so very wonderful for a fellow to run out of town for a week or two, that all the town must fancy he has committed suicide, or eloped, or, in fact, performed some memorable feat ?”

“ You must confess that the first freshness of the London season is rather a peculiar time for a gay man like you to disappear, and might almost justify his friends putting one of those mysterious advertisements in the ‘ Times,’ which daily record the loss of some interesting youth, who has quarrelled with his bread and butter, or of some savage *pater familias*, who is so pathetically entreated to return to his disconsolate wife and family. However, as you do

not own these relations, we could not decide upon any object sufficiently tempting to induce you to return."

"I suppose there has been nothing particular going on during my absence?"

"About the usual number of balls and dinners. I saw a heap of notes for you here yesterday—no doubt, invites of all kinds; you will have plenty of amusement in reading them."

"Is that a hint that you are impatient to return to your book? What! another novel, Stanley? You will soon be a circulating library. How can you devour such things so constantly? You must have quite a collection of fortunate and unfortunate love stories in your head. You might improvise a most interesting scene at 'the shortest notice,' with any young lady well be-muslined."

"I wonder which is the most harmless recreation—reading of romantic incidents, of deep impressions and strong feelings, or acting them, and that too with such a strong feeling of reality, that many may be deceived. You must confess, my dear fellow, that I choose a much safer game, both for myself and for others; when



I am content to fancy myself the hero of every book I read, and thus to enjoy that excitement of feelings and circumstances which most people try to act for themselves."

"That is all very well ; but, after all, novel reading is but a waste of time—a very flimsy exercise of one's intellect."

"Granted ; but I do not lounge here, when I want to go to work. I do that all day ; and when the brain requires relaxing, I maintain that a good novel is an excellent means of doing so, especially as when you have finished the third volume, you are in no way committed, which is more than you can generally say, after indulging the same feelings in real life, which such a book as this in my hand calls up. If I read novels all day, I should think my mental powers and energies were in a fair way towards ruin ; but so they would be, if I talked sweet nothings to young ladies constantly, or sought mere amusement, and nothing more."

"That sounds very plausible ; but why is it, that all the wise ones shake their heads at the sight of one of those entrancing volumes,

whose wide marginal pages and clear types proclaim the class of literature to which they belong?"

"Come—I shall not let you claim *all* the wise ones on your side of the question. What say you to Sir James Mackintosh's authority? You will grant that his intellect was of no common calibre, yet it was not seldom that he indulged in the perusal of fiction. I was reading his life the other day, and I turned down a page to show you; for I know how you always attack my light studies. I must look for the book; it is not likely to have been moved. Here it is. Now, listen to this: 'Objectors have looked only to the imperfections and faults of fiction, which, however, all modes of moral discipline have. It is more imperfect than real life, because sympathy in real life is followed by active benevolence. . . . Aristotle and Bacon consider fiction and poetry as equivalent terms.' "

"As no one can deny that poetry is a divine gift, I suppose, with such authorities as Mackintosh brings to his aid, we must admit the merit of fiction."

“ But listen to a few more lines. They seem to me an excellent defence of the much-abused novels. ‘ Fiction represents a degree of moral excellence, superior to any virtue which is to be observed in real life. This effect is perfectly analogous to that of a model of ideal beauty in the elegant arts. Valour and benevolence may be embodied in the hero of a tale, as female beauty in the Venus, or male beauty in the Apollo.’ ”

“ If you can bring such a defence for your amusements, people will not be able to say much against them. As for me, I must give up making war upon your evening companions, if you confound me by such quotations. But now let us leave the heroics, and descend to every-day life. What are you going to do to-morrow ?”

“ What can you be thinking of, to ask me, Murray ? Have you forgotten that there are such things as assizes held in England, and that it is my custom to attend them ?”

“ Nonsense ; you don’t say that to-morrow is commission-day at Granton ?”

“ I do though, and that I must start early

in the morning, or my friends in those parts will look thunder-clouds at the presumption of a junior venturing to be absent, when he is required. But pray, do not let any one else have an idea that you forgot such an event as spring assizes; for although you are looked upon as little better than an honorary member of the bar now, still I think you would deserve to lose even that honour, if your voluntary ignorance were published. Do you not intend joining us at any point of the circuit this time?"

"Perhaps I may in my own country, but it is useless for me to go all the way, when you usurp all the work; however, I do not deserve to get any, for I know I am a sad idle dog."

"I hope we shall see you somewhere. I go to Langston after circuit for a short time: *à propos* to that, I have not seen you since Vernon's wedding. How was it that you declined going to it? They were rather hurt at your refusal, and I do not think you have any objection to being a spectator on such an occasion."

“ I dare say you will laugh at me, when I tell you that I by no means liked the idea of seeing Adeline as a bride. I remember feeling rather peculiar, when that little Theresa Digby was married, and yet she had not taken my fancy half as much as Adeline Harcourt. I could only avoid accepting the invitation by leaving town, therefore took flight in time.”

“ And where did you choose to sigh the hours away ? Beside some silent lake, or murmuring stream, or in the shade of some gloomy wood ?”

“ Neither one or the other. I rushed off to Paris, the city for dissipating anything like serious thought. It was very gay, and I have rubbed off regrets of the past ; there is nothing like the society one meets with in that place for forgetting any annoyance of mind or body : it is always my remedy for ailments, and you will allow it is far from an unpleasant one.”

“ I cannot endure Paris, for my part ; it is such a heartless scene ; very well for a day or two once in ten years, but odious for longer. And I do not agree with you in thinking that it is a desirable place for eradicating any impression of

the feelings ; doubtless, the excitement which is always to be found there may drown one's inward emotions for the time we are involved in the whirling tide ; but when that is past, I believe the old thoughts will return all the stronger for the evil discipline that had been chosen to control them. To enter into Parisian society as a means of banishing temptation is a fallacy, something like learning life from the modern literature which streams from its prolific press."

"Every one knows best what effects his purpose, and I find a little gaiety in Paris very useful in my moral economy ; perhaps I am glad to think so, as I must confess it has a great charm for me."

"If I had the privilege of inspecting your inward being, Murray, I expect I should not find my ideas of your mode of self-discipline much improved. •You cannot tell me that your fortnight in Paris would be of much assistance in enabling you to steer aright if you were thrown much into Mrs. Vernon's society ; depend upon it, you would be tempted to indulge yourself by conversing with her. I do not mean to say, old

fellow, that you would try to weaken her fealty towards Vernon, but you would think it could not injure her to sun yourself in her smiles, and enjoy her brilliant conversation. But, believe me, such a beginning could only give you more trouble and difficulty afterwards ; for I defy any one to be much in the society of a being towards whom he has felt a shade of affection without that feeling returning, unless he try a very different mode of conquering it to your system of counter-excitement."

"You look to higher ends of being than I do, Stanley ; I am afraid you are right in your conjectures of my character. I have experienced before this how weak I have been in real emergencies ; how irresolute my endeavours to act up to my convictions of right. How erroneous the world's judgments are !"

"Is that meant for a fact or a reflection ? What was the idea which gave rise to that exclamation ?"

"I just thought of the different characters you and I bear ; because I often indulge in somewhat desultory moral remarks, or fanciful reasonings on the evils of society, many consider me

competent to advise them, and come to me when they are in an awkward position ; while you who really think so justly, and invest responsibilities and duties with the importance they merit, are seldom referred to by any."

"Perhaps that is my own fault. You know I wear a different aspect in society to the one which you and one or two others see. I cannot explain my motives and feelings to every one ; they seem something set apart for my own use, something almost sacred from their mystery."

"Yes, I cannot wonder that few would ask your opinion : when they hear your biting sarcasms, and almost universal suspicions, they would shrink from submitting to the fathoming ordeal of penetration which they must expect you would impose. I think this part of your character prevents your using that influence which you have every right to possess as effectively as you might."

"That may be, but I could never throw down the wall of partition which divides me from the world. I cannot stoop to please what I so thoroughly despise ; yet to look grave and weep over its follies would be absurd—one can only



scorn and ridicule them. I confess that I do not fancy I am a very likely fellow to receive confidences of perplexities and troubles, and I have no ambition to be the general adviser of mankind."

"Yours is a code of refined selfishness after all. You give no feelings, no sympathies to others, and yet you complain of the world's heartlessness. Do you think you can always live on in your own atmosphere; that your fancies and dreams will afford you companionship and happiness?"

"Perhaps not, but general sympathies and universal trust would still less. If I ever find one person who will love me for myself alone, with pure, unalterable love, then she may lift the veil of reserve which some think so impenetrable; and if she appreciate and understand me, the more different I appear to her to what I do to others, the better I shall like it, and the more she will seem my own."

"You are an odd fellow, I do not quite comprehend you; but how I have interrupted your novel; I am afraid your interest in the

hero will have diminished: well, I shall not see you for some time, we may meet at Sherington, but it is uncertain. Good night—a profitable circuit to you.”

## CHAPTER V.

His forehead high and pale,  
The sable curls in wild profusion veil :  
And oft perforce, his rising lip reveals  
The haughtier thought it curbs, but scarce conceals  
\* \* \* \*

Such might it be—that none could truly tell  
Too close inquiry, his stern glance would quell.

BYRON.

AFTER Adeline had been at Fountain Court about a month, she wrote a most pressing invitation to Marion, entreating her to spend some time with her. Mrs. Harcourt was rather inclined to negative this proposal, as she thought the loss of a London season a great consideration ; however, Marion's delight at the idea of being again with her sister, and of gratifying

her taste for the pleasures of the country, overcame her mother's scruples, and a most affectionate consent was written to Adeline's request. Marion anticipated meeting her sister again with almost childish delight ; they had never been parted before, and a warm affection united them. Adeline regarded Marion with feelings of almost reverence as well as love ; her equable, gentle disposition had unspeakable charms for the impulsive and somewhat too demonstrative Adeline, who, notwithstanding the great power her influence had over most people, had been accustomed to regard Marion's opinion with more deference than she accorded to any one else. Marion felt the void which Adeline's absence left more than could be expressed, and far more than she appeared to do ; it was a loss of which every hour reminded her, for although Marion had followed many pursuits to which Adeline had given but little attention, yet they had ever objects of mutual interest to converse upon, and Adeline's high, joyous spirits had always been most fascinating to Marion, who was perhaps almost too calm and quiet.

Young people should have intercourse with each other : it is the refinement of cruelty to condemn the fresh, enthusiastic mind always to listen to the hard experiences, the anxious cares, and but too often querulous complaints of those who have forgotten the feelings of youth, and who must have had the bright, ardent imaginings of that period somewhat dimmed and obscured, even if they have preserved their sympathies and delicate discernment. The tastes and desires of young and old differ so essentially, that it is far from desirable for them to be thrown constantly together ; let the young sometimes enjoy each other's society, with all its piquancy, and even all its nonsense ; let them laugh while they can at they know not what, the time approaches but too quickly when the wheels of life become heavy and need a stirring impetus to restore them to the vivacity of early days.

Marion had felt a monotony, a weariness in her existence since Adeline's marriage, which she would scarcely admit even to herself ; she had missed the ready perceptions of thought, the eager participation of her pleasures, the en-

hanced delight of sharing her enjoyments with another ; although she had unceasingly striven to throw off the *ennui* which occasionally threatened her, and had exerted herself to the utmost to amuse her parents, yet it was with an increase of happiness and cheerfulness, which almost surprised herself, that she found herself anxiously counting the minutes until she should arrive at the station where Captain Vernon had promised to meet her. As the train rushed onwards she soon discovered him on the platform, and when it stopped, he quickly recognized her, and hastened to greet her. Most cordial was their meeting, and Marion felt assured she must be happy when her host welcomed her so warmly. The luggage was soon placed on the carriage, and they drove rapidly towards Fountain Court, through a lovely tract of rural scenery.

“ Adeline would have come to meet you, but some tiresome neighbours came in, and I would not wait until they departed, for fear of not reaching the station in time for you ; but we shall find her in readiness for us in the

garden. I hope you will think her looking well."

"She writes in such excellent spirits, that I expect to find her in full force; this delicious country air must give her health and strength, it is so delightful after the dust and heat of town."

"You always enjoy a fresh breeze, but you are very unfashionable to come and ruralize with us instead of indulging in balls and *fêtes*. When you feel it dull, you must take flight, and leave our solitude, although I shall wish for a fairy's wand to transform our flowers into gallant, gay cavaliers to prevent your leaving us."

"Do not wish for anything of the kind, for I shall be quite happy without any addition to our trio; the only fear will be, that I shall wear out your hospitality before I am ready to depart; I shall have so much to say to Adeline, I have never been so long away from her before."

"Poor Marion, you must have missed her terribly, the house must seem dull indeed, for

she is a merry being, how she used to delight in teasing us all! I think she minded you more than any of the rest. I often say I must send for you, when she is very tyrannical and insists on her own will."

"But you must not spoil her by your kindness. I often thought you were over indulgent, but now you have a husband's authority, though I very much suspect that it is but seldom exercised."

"Authority is my detestation, and Adeline shall never have mine imposed on her."

"I used too strong a term, influence was my meaning; and you will exert that, for Adeline is very young to be left entirely to her own guidance; of course, she would always seek your advice, but you must do more than merely give it when she asks for it—you must guard and protect her as well as worship her, as you seem inclined to do. Many men are so afraid of alienating their wives' affection by seeming to thwart their inclinations in the early days of married life, that all idea of deference, all habit of compliance with their wishes is lost; and then



in after years, when perhaps circumstances occur which almost demand a husband's interference, then the lady is hurt and vexed by his usurping an authority which should always have been at his command. Believe me, Captain Vernon, such a mode of preserving affection is but a selfish one after all! But I am getting sadly dogmatic and conceited, I am afraid, to give my opinion on such a point. What a pretty cottage! this is the entrance to your village I suppose?"

"Yes; and our plantations adjoin it; but the house is a mile and a half further, but we shall soon catch a glimpse of it through the trees: our predecessor had doomed the timber, but fortunately was prevented executing his intentions, or the beauty of the place would have suffered terribly, and in a way which would have taken many years to repair. If you look to the left, you will soon have a peep at our home."

The carriage quickly passed the lodge, and drove through the shrubberies, which were brilliant with the rhododendrons and other American

plants. The house soon appeared: it was a large, well-proportioned edifice, built in the modern style; there was a fine clump of elm-trees on the lawn, in front, and one or two old oaks, which added much to the beauty of the approach, the gravelled sweep of which was terminated by a portico, on the steps of which stood Adeline, impatiently waiting for Marion. The sisters' embrace was most affectionate; and after many questions had been asked and answered, Mrs. Vernon insisted upon showing Marion over the house.

The drawing-room was a spacious, elegant room, with rose-coloured draperies, which harmonized well with the delicately-tinted walls, and threw a lovely hue over the numerous ornaments with which the marble *consoles* were covered. Some rooms never have that indescribable air which can only be fancied by the term of being as if they were used, but have a chilling, repulsive look, all the chairs placed against the walls, the tables cold and bright, on which books in ornamental bindings are laid at right angles, the very sofas look too stiff and

formal to be used. I like to see a room as if its occupant had just left it, with a book open on one table, and a desk on another, and perhaps a work-basket on a sofa—something to speak of life and action, anything rather than the cold apathy of uselessness. To me the arrangement of a room is the type of its owner's mind, the very grouping of the furniture tells of the prevailing tastes and feelings. Adeline's drawing-room was the picture of refined comfort: a frame with her embroidery stood beside a couch, and a basket with the gaily-coloured wools was near it; the newspaper on the table, and a book with a paper-knife between some of its still uncut leaves, seemed to say, the fair lady of the mansion had but just abandoned the room, and yet she had not entered it that day, for she generally sat in her boudoir, which was a perfect gem of a retreat, and so Marion thought when Adeline threw open the door.

The large bow-window, round which the clematis and other creepers clustered, was thrown open upon the lawn which was gay

with the variously formed beds of bright flowers near it; the warm gleams of sunshine fell through the muslin curtains, and rested upon the beautiful inlaid desk, glancing on the carved inkstand, and all the numberless accessories of the writing-table; the other tiny tables with their glistening vases of lovely flowers, the small piano, the pretty cabinets filled with books, the exquisite water-colour drawings which decorated the walls, all produced an *ensemble* of taste and elegance. Marion was quite ready to accord praise and delight enough to gratify Adeline's preference for this most agreeable room, and no longer wondered at seeing the drawing-room deserted; for although that had a pretty view of the grounds, there was something so hushed and tranquil in the seclusion of the garden near the boudoir, the shade from the drooping laburnums and lilacs seemed to enclose it so completely from all intrusion, that Marion flung herself upon a sofa with an exclamation which convinced Adeline of her perfect content.

The days passed rapidly away, while Marion

was at Fountain Court ; there was so much to be done, so many places to be seen, that some expedition was made daily either in Adeline's pretty pony carriage, or on horseback. Then there were the visits of the neighbourhood to be received or returned ; for the arrival of a new family in a county immediately causes excitement and raises curiosity. All the inquiries of " Who are they ? " and " What are they ? " seemed to have been answered to the satisfaction of the inhabitants of ——shire, for every one hastened to make Captain and Mrs. Vernon's acquaintance. The mammas hailed the prospect of some novelties for dinners, the gentlemen liked Vernon's frank hospitality ; and as there were some capital preserves at Fountain Court, he immediately found himself a popular man. The young ladies anticipated an occasional dance, and a little impetus to the gaiety of the neighbourhood, and hoped for Mrs. Vernon's *chaperonage*, her very loveliness which, had she been yet single, would have made her an object for their petty jealousy, now won her universal regard ; and it was with some little

disappointment that Marion's appearance was received, for the beautiful Mrs. Vernon's pretty sister was likely to interfere with the hopes and speculations of the fair claimants for admiration in ——shire.

There is infinitely more malice and spite indulged in country society than in that of town, for when people are thrown constantly together, their interests clash perpetually ; there is far more individuality to be observed in the country ; how frequently one day there, will enlighten one about the character of a person whom we may have met often in London crushes and dinners, where all seem stamped with one type, and where originality and genuineness have an additional charm from their novelty.

Marion's unaffected simplicity and kindness soon made her popular, and many pleasant hours were passed at the different houses in the neighbourhood, for dinners invariably follow calls ; people naturally take more pains to please and to be pleased by those near whom they expect to live, and who may have a considerable

influence upon their comfort and enjoyment. Langston was almost the only house which Marion had not visited, for all neighbourly civilities had been exchanged before she had arrived, and since that, Mr. Stanley had been confined to his room by an attack of the gout ; and as Arthur was still on circuit, there was little chance of any intercourse being renewed for the present. But our friend Stanley was considered far too an important personage by the neighbourhood to be forgotten in his absence ; Marion heard his name almost wherever she went, and could often scarcely resist a smile when his peculiarities were mentioned, and his habit of making sarcastic observations was complained of.

There was a secret feeling of satisfaction in Marion's heart at knowing that although Arthur might be all she heard him described to the world in general, yet to her he had showed himself in another and far different aspect ; that cold and passionless as he appeared in society, to her he had betrayed warm and sympathizing feelings ; and although

she recognized the reality of many things which were attributed to him, yet she rejoiced at possessing that insight into his character which prevented her from shrinking from the severity and sternness in which she knew he habitually indulged. The young ladies certainly launched out into enthusiastic praises of "his noble brow," and indulged in high-flown epithets of "his magnificent eyes," about the colour of which there were endless disputes, for they were of that dark-grey which varies with every thought, and sometimes rivals the darkness of night. One or two of the most romantic of his admirers contended about the effect of his scornful smile, and eulogized it in terms which might have suited some Byronic Corsair.

All this disgusted Marion, and she began to understand the reasons for Stanley's contempt for women, and almost to sympathize with his proud indifference to their opinion; for from the frequent encomiums of Langston, which were mingled with his personal praises, she began to suspect that great part of the interest



Stanley excited, was derived from his prospects and position.

Like all warm-hearted sensitive women who feel a dawning affection, she was watchfully jealous of the reputation of the object of her regard ; every misrepresentation of his opinions, every unworthy motive which she heard attributed to him, made her brow flush with indignation ; and often the ready words of justification would tremble on her lips, although she shrunk from avowing them, for with all Marion's calmness and self-possession, she was a terrible coward about some things.

Captain Vernon was always warm and cordial in his expressions of regard for Stanley, and Marion was very well satisfied with the opinion she heard of him at Fountain Court, although he was not a very great favourite of Adeline's, who never quite forgave him for the remarks he made about her jealous fit of Vernon ; but Marion had not such a deference for her sister's discrimination, as to attach much importance to her judgment.

Marion heard so much in praise of Langston, that she began to wish it might be included in their expedition for sight-seeing, but as Captain Vernon had never suggested it she was obliged to wish in vain ; and among all her employments, this fancy not being gratified did not cause many regrets.

She found time to make several pretty sketches in the park at Fountain Court, much to Vernon's delight, who claimed them all as mementoes of the scenes of his bridal happiness, for he still floated on amid the brightness and joyousness which the tone of his own character engendered ; and although Adeline's natural impatience occasionally disturbed his happiness for a brief season, the cloud soon disappeared, and seemed to leave the horizon still brighter from the contrast of the passing shadow. Marion could not avoid a sigh when she saw Adeline trifling with her happiness by caprice and folly, but she knew how useless any advice would be, she therefore trusted that Vernon's forbearance and kindness would gradually make her more careful and anxious not to annoy him. She

rejoiced that Mrs. Harcourt was not present at any of these momentary ebullitions of temper, because she knew that she would not let them pass without notice ; and Marion felt persuaded that her mother's irritating interference, however well meant, would do far more harm than good, for Adeline required the gentlest rein and the most judicious advice ; indeed, the happiness of many newly-married persons is marred for ever by the evil effects of counsel from third parties.

The first year of married life is of the utmost importance, for then are sown the seeds for the comfort and misery of the future. Constant intercourse displays many points in dispositions, many faults and failings which had not been exerted during the days of courtship ; it is the time of trial for the woman, who finds herself dethroned from the pinnacle to which she had been exalted for admiration as a goddess or an angel, and is compelled to descend to the every-day duties and trials of a mere woman. Happy is she who acquiesces cheerfully in this inevitable change,

valuing and estimating the affection and esteem of her husband, and endeavouring to secure it by her forbearance and equanimity.

## CHAPTER VI.

Love thee ?—so well, so tenderly  
Thou'rt lov'd, ador'd by me,  
Fame, fortune, wealth and liberty  
Were worthless without thee.  
Though brimm'd with blessings, pure and rare,  
Life's cup before me lay,  
Unless thy love were mingled there,  
I'd spurn the draught away.

T. MOORE.

THERE was a party of men lounging over their wine in the hotel at Sherington, the assize town to which I have before introduced you. The windows were thrown open, but although the stillness of a country town prevailed, the air that was wafted in was heavy and unrefreshing.

The table was covered with glasses and decanters, but there seemed to be a cessation from the rapidity of their circulation ; the hum and murmur of conversation was heard, and reminiscences of the last night's ball, anecdotes of horses, merry wit, and bitter repartee, were mingled with discussions of the legal transactions which had passed during the day ; for this was the mess-room of the circuit to which Stanley belonged. Two or three gay young barristers were gossiping about the belles of the neighbourhood, at last one asked :

“ Is there not a very pretty woman living near here ? I mean something quite out of the way. I fancy I heard Murray say so in town, and he is no bad judge ; she must be a new-comer, for I know most of the old stagers.”

“ I did not see any one wonderful at the ball last night, certainly no fresh beauty,” replied another : “ the Pakenhams were there, but we all know them.”

“ I expect Breynton is thinking about the bride,” said a third, “ it was a great disappointment that she did not appear yesterday, she was fully expected ; but I heard one of the stewards

say, a lame horse, or something of the sort, prevented her coming ; my cousin was *au désespoir*, for he had anticipated meeting some lady who is staying with this beauty you are talking of ; I am not sure she is not her sister ; he met her at some dinner party, and has raved about her ever since ; but I have forgotten their names, I always do, which is very provoking.”

“ It is indeed, for without them, we can never learn anything correctly ; but Stanley well knows this part of the world, just ask him about these people.”

“ Wait a minute, he is arguing some knotty point with the Sergeant, if you interrupt him now, he will tell us nothing ; the old gentleman will be soon confuted, and then we will attack him.”

However, Stanley’s conversation did not appear likely to come to a conclusion, and the curiosity of the talkers opposite to him was eager for gratification ; therefore one of them seized the first pause in the argument, and said, “ Stanley, who are the people who are living near Langston ? They say the lady is very

beautiful, and I fancy is a bride; we are all dying to see her."

"I suppose you mean the Vernons, of Fountain Court; he is a great friend of mine, and his wife is indeed lovely; they have not been married many months. I wonder you have not met them about, for they both like society."

"There is some young lady staying with them, who seems to be a great favourite with every one. I believe she is a sister of Mrs. Vernon's, do you remember what her name was?"

"Mrs. Vernon was a Miss Harcourt," was Stanley's answer, in rather a constrained voice.

"Ah! that is the name of the lady my cousin mentioned. She is fair, and delicate-looking, I believe; he said she seemed a nice girl enough."

"Miss Harcourt must feel honoured by his good opinion," haughtily rejoined Stanley. "I had no idea she had left town. Is Mrs. Vernon popular in the neighbourhood?"

"Quite the rage, I hear; she sings, dances, and is ready to promote any amusement: what



more can be desired by the most exacting of mortals ?”

One of Stanley's scornful smiles crossed his lips as he turned away from his inquisitive acquaintance, and resumed his discussion with his learned friend. And apparently he was deeply interested in his argument, for his energy and intellect were keenly analyzing and developing the point at issue ; and notwithstanding his slight change of manner when speaking of Miss Harcourt, the most quizzical of his companions could not have guessed that she was the load-star of his heart. Yet he was deeply annoyed at having heard her name even mentioned as he had done ; more vexed by such a trifling occurrence than any one could imagine who did not know the pride and sensitiveness of his spirit. He would have had Marion set apart like some holy mystery, where none could see or know her, himself the only being privileged to worship and admire. He could not endure to think that any one else should gaze on those truthful eyes, which were to him the very shrine of purity and love, that the spell of her unaffected charms should be shed on any but himself : even now,

when he was calmly reasoning on some subtle legality, his heart was throbbing with jealousy and doubt. Yet not a tinge of impatience or of preoccupation could be traced in his manner, he was quiet, observing, and brilliant as ever ; but it was with no slight feeling of relief that, after the party separated, he found himself in his own rooms.

He resolved to ride over to Langston the following day ; once there, he could easily visit Fountain Court, and then a thousand visions of delightful rambles and unconstrained intercourse arose to charm him. Much as Stanley had enjoyed Marion's society in town, delightful as the freshness and simplicity of her character had appeared to him, amid the heartlessness and vanity by which he was surrounded, yet still he felt that she would harmonize better with the sweet, mild influences of the country. He longed to see her at Langston, he wished to show her its beauties, he would fain connect her image with his home ; with that place to which he was bound by all the associations of happy childhood, all the pleasures and sports of eager youth, all the burning aspirations and dreams of

ambition of early manhood. And where too he had indulged hopes and fancies which had never yet been realized ; where he had dreamed of sweet, holy influences which were to gild his future fate ; where he had felt a cessation from worldly struggles, and had enjoyed calm and tranquillity. Langston was a species of talisman to Arthur ; he thought upon it, as of some oasis in the desert, some soothing harmony amid the harsh discords of life. Every tree was dear to him, and every corner of the park had its connecting link in his memory ; as he rode through the avenue which led to the house, he was busily planning how he should show his home to its greatest advantage to Marion, for he felt convinced she had not yet been there, or his father would have mentioned it in his letters. However, to assure himself on this point, one of his first questions to Mr. Stanley was of the Vernons, and he soon heard that neither of the ladies from Fountain Court had been to Langston since Mrs. Vernon had dined there, on her first coming into the county.

Impatiently did Arthur anticipate the morrow, when he intended riding to see his friends,

and yet he would not own, even to himself, that the expectation of meeting Marion was the real reason for his anxiety to pay the visit ; no, he wished to consult Vernon on some poaching question, and had a message for Adeline about her flower-garden, or he wanted to look at a new horse : by all or any of these things, he endeavoured to account to himself for his unusual excitement about his morning ride. However, when the sun shone bright and clear the next day, he did not linger to analyze his feelings of pleasure as he galloped over the turf, after telling his father he was going to make some calls, and might not return until late.

As Arthur urged his horse over the open country, he could scarcely refrain from shrinking from the vehemence of his own emotions, for he was not one to indulge deep feelings without endeavouring to pierce the dim veil of futurity, to learn whither they would conduct him. He remembered all his vague, undefined longings for the love and sympathy of a being of whom he had dreamed ; he thought of the many visions of beauty and refinement which he had followed for a short time, until he had proved

their hollowness ; he tried to call up his ambitious desires for success in the world, to realize his proud boasts of impenetrability and unsusceptibility : anything to banish the passion which he felt was mastering his heart, and the strength of which he knew would endure through all opposition. He almost shuddered when he thought of the disappointment and grief which will overshadow even the brightest and warmest feelings, for he had always maintained the opinion, that, in proportion to the strength of love is the depth of suffering ; and although he had often deemed himself bold of heart, still he mentally trembled at the darkness which he felt would envelope his life, should his love for Marion be obscured by change and doubt, or be severed by any of those mysterious events which assert such powerful influence over us. As he approached Fountain Court, he involuntarily slackened his pace, with the restlessness of a lover's mood, who had rushed eagerly on for a meeting, and yet when it approached, almost hesitated to seize the opportunity.

Instead of going through the village and

riding through the shrubberies to the house, Stanley turned his horse into a little coppice which led to the garden. As he was going quietly on, he fancied he saw Marion a little in advance, therefore, as he wished to avoid following her, he struck into a side path, which she knew would soon bring him back to the one he was treading, at a point where he calculated he should meet her.

She was walking slowly on, apparently enjoying the loveliness of the spring morning—now and then stooping to gather one of the numerous flowers which grew among the underwood. Stanley soon decided that this was done in unsophisticated admiration of their beauty, not from a desire of examining their botanical structure; for he would have rather gazed upon her present musing, idle mood, than have interrupted her in any scientific study. He had timed his pace well, for just as she crossed the little opening in the wood, she heard a horse near, and turning to see whence proceeded the sound, she saw Stanley close to her. She stopped; and a blush, vivid as he could desire, mantled her cheek,

when she shook hands with him. Unlike what many young ladies would have done, Marion had not betrayed her surprise at this *rencontre* by a scream; yet Stanley was not the less satisfied by her manner and cordial greeting: he dismounted, and putting his arm through the bridle, accompanied her in her walk.

There was a slight tinge of embarrassment about Marion, as they gently strolled along; but the sweetness of her smile prevented Stanley attributing it to annoyance at his presence. With the rapid perception he possessed, he imagined it to proceed from timidity, although the usual calmness and self-possession which she displayed, generally prevented Marion's being allowed the excuse of nervous shyness. He talked about Vernon and Adeline, inquired so kindly about her own opinion of the neighbourhood, that Marion soon forgot her astonishment and consequent constraint caused by his sudden appearance, and appeared the same frank, confiding being he had always found her; and although his heart beat wildly, and words of ardent, passionate meaning seemed

rushing to his lips, he sternly controlled them, and gazed calmly on her sweet, animated countenance, fearful of alarming her sensitive feelings, of losing the charm of their pleasant intercourse, and of destroying that sincere, warm-hearted interest which she had manifested for him. He walked by her side, apparently forgetful that he had ever given her reason, by word or look, to believe that he had entertained a warmer feeling than friendship for her; and yet with such an indescribable tone in his voice, and such a lingering kindness in his glance, that she could not feel hurt, or accuse him of coldness or of change.

Had he followed his own inclination, he would soon have relapsed into silence; but feeling that, in some circumstances, silence is the most dangerous, the most suggestive of languages, he persisted in conversing, and perhaps never in all their interviews had Marion and Stanley been more perseveringly talkative. He felt there was more safety in pursuing discussions on the position and prospects of their acquaintance, or in relating some of the local traditions, and of promoting a little playful



*badinage*, than in yielding to the soft influences of a spring morning, with all the young leaves whispering around, when the grass springs lovingly to meet your footsteps, and the happy birds are carolling to each other; when the very clouds, as they float in the clear heaven above, seem rapidly careering on wings of light and love !

Stanley shrunk from the conversation taking any turn which might induce him to allude to his own feelings and ideas, and avoided giving Marion any of those gleams of intelligence as to his real character which he had before granted her. He well sustained the part he had determined to play, and no one could have guessed, from his manner or conversation, how every tone of the fair girl at his side was thrilling to his heart, and how every look was noted on his memory ! But he felt the difficulty of maintaining his resolution increase every moment, and it was with a feeling of relief, which may appear almost unaccountable to some people, that he found they had reached the garden, where they saw Mrs. Vernon walking.

Stanley gave his horse to a boy who was near, and followed Marion through the pretty rustic gate which divided the greenhouses from the meadow. Adeline's astonishment at Arthur's appearance was not to be mistaken.

"Where have you sprung from?" she exclaimed, as she turned to meet him. "I had no idea you were in this part of the world. When did you arrive?"

"A little mercy, Mrs. Vernon! Which question am I to answer first? Your curiosity is unbounded."

"Always answer the last part of a lady's speech first; she may then forget the commencement. You must have learned that secret ere this."

"Then, I arrived at Langston yesterday; and as to being expected, perhaps my advent was not exactly anticipated, although, *of course*, it was hoped for!"

"You are a bold man to say so, when you are looked upon as a species of ogre by all the young ladies here; being so savage, so little indulgent to their weaknesses and caprices.

We have heard pretty tales of your *hauteur* and severity."

"But, of course, you disbelieved them all; and if you have acted with charity, you have contradicted them, and defended me; because, being absent, I could not take care of myself. You ought to have informed my country friends how fascinating I appear in town; that I am quite a different being when I lose the influence of rusticity."

"I have not been half so amiable, I assure you; indeed, in sincerity, I could but acquiesce in the truth of many things I heard of you; but Frederic is a gallant champion of yours, and as he is rather useful at balls, and can sing a second in a duet, I fancy, just to please him, that some of the fair ladies have forgiven your last attack upon their vanity and frivolity; and, let me see, have you not vowed a crusade against some other *feminine* peculiarity, as you consider it, which you call inconstancy, love of variety, or something of the sort?"

"I am delighted to know that some one has been courageous enough to assert the rights of

the absent and defamed, although it be not a gentle friend; however, I am not afraid of meeting my assailers in fair field; at all events, I think I shall be able to silence them."

"Are you not expecting me to launch out into complaints of the dullness of country life, and to hear me long for a box at the opera, or invitations to all the grand balls? If so, you will lose an opportunity of gratifying your sarcastic vein; for I assert that I am by no means wearied of being 'Monarch of all I survey,' and of superintending my flowers and poultry-yard."

"No, indeed, I should not have fancied you could yet have worn out the excitement of new acquaintances, and of a new position, and all the delights of this lovely place, for it is very pretty," said Stanley as he glanced admiringly round.

"Almost as pretty as Langston?" smilingly asked Adeline. "Fred tells me you think that the quintessence of perfection."

"It is in such a different style that they will not bear comparison; and now poor Langston

is quite eclipsed, for it cannot boast the attractions Fountain Court enjoys ; will you transfer them there for a day, Mrs. Vernon ? my father has sent me as his ambassador to beg you will give him to-morrow. Can you and Vernon dine rather early to chime in with the prescribed routine of an invalid ? And then you can lounge in the gardens afterwards ; the gardener has a grand supply of geraniums in readiness for you."

" I shall enjoy it of all things ; where is Marion ? Oh ! I dare say she is gone to tell Fred you are here ; come in and lunch with us, and then we can talk about to-morrow."

They found Marion in the dining-room, and soon after Captain Vernon appeared, exclaiming as he entered :

" Well, Stanley, welcome here. I should have joined you on the lawn, only some fellow was with me about that poaching rascal Smith, and, of course, being a conscientious magistrate, I could not cut short his story, as I felt inclined to do."

" How do you like your new duties ? rather different to your old game of court-martials, I

fancy ; how do you get on ? I expect you laugh when you ought to look stern and commanding, and are no great assistance to your brothers in the commission."

"They are such stupid heavy fellows, and take as long to decide a case, which is as clear as daylight, as if Truth did really lie in a well, and the rope which ought to haul her up was broken ! But you barristers laugh at we country gentlemen turning judges in the land ! Have you had a good circuit ?"

"Very fair. I have no reason to complain ; but a truce to professional talk—I want you all to dine with us to-morrow at early unfashionable hours ; but my father is not off the invalid's list. Have you been to Langston lately ?"

"No, not for some time. I heard Mr. Stanley was laid up, and was afraid of intruding."

"Then you have not been there, Miss Harcourt, although you have been so busy exploring ; never mind, it is in full beauty now. I am rather glad Vernon has been so remiss as to consider it not worth a visit, as now I shall play showman myself !"

“I shall be delighted to be initiated, for I really think it is the only corner I have not seen. I hope you will be very patient in your new capacity of cicerone, as I am very exacting on such occasions.”

“Then, Mrs Vernon, I consider you all bound to us to-morrow ; I think I shall ride and meet you at the park, and then, if you like to walk across, I can show you the new walk. Pray make no toilettes, or my dear, punctilious father will be quite unhappy at being obliged to receive you *en deshabelle*.”

“Perhaps you will kindly inform us what your taste is, and we shall try to gratify it ; although I do not think you are very clever about ladies’ attire,” answered Adeline mockingly.

“Nonsense, you know I am a perfect ignoramus in the nomenclature of the wardrobe ; and I could not pretend to assist Mrs. Vernon’s well-known taste in her toilette ; I was thinking more of my father than of you when I spoke, so forgive my hint.”

Stanley’s opinion was demanded about the improvements and alterations at Fountain Court,

and it was late in the afternoon before he found himself on his road back to Langston, very well pleased with the result of his ride, and anticipating the morrow with almost more delight than he had done the day which was now fast ebbing away, with all its influences and impressions, which he felt time could never efface.



## CHAPTER VII.

Herds of graceful dew,  
Pampered, perchance, until they half forget  
Their native fleetness, o'er the ample park  
Roamed at their pleasure . . .

While a drooping ash,  
Of foliage rich, stood lonely near the gates,  
Like the presiding genius of the place,  
Unique and beautiful.

But wondering most we marked  
A princely labyrinth of plants and flowers.  
Flowers, glorious flowers! that dwelt in Eden's bound,  
Yet sinn'd not, fell not, and whose silent speech  
Is of a better paradise, where ye,  
Catching the essence of the deathless soul  
Shall never fade.

LYDIA SIGOURNEY.

ARTHUR cast a lingering look over the drawing-room at Langston the next morning, as if

to assure himself that the sofas were in the pleasantest situations, that the tables were furnished with the newest publications, and the vases replenished with the freshest flowers ; he felt he could add nothing to its comfort and yet there was something wanting to complete its charm—there were no traces of woman's sweet presence, and without that, how many indescribable trifles were missing ! He passed on to the conservatory, which adjoined it, and there, at all events he had no reason for dissatisfaction, for it presented a gay and glowing scene of colour and beauty. There is a restless, nervous feeling which arises when we are preparing' for one we love—there is such a trembling solicitude lest any omission shall deprive them of pleasure, such a fear but they should not appreciate what we so fondly cherish. How Stanley's gay acquaintances would have smiled, had they but seen the doubtful scrutinizing glance with which he passed through the gardens, and known that he, who was generally so cold and indifferent, was now anxious about the bloom on a rose-tree, or the fall of a curtain.

Do not let any one accuse Arthur of a vulgar taste for display or ostentation—it was not because Langston was his inheritance that he wished it to appear in its loveliest garb to Marion ; but because its beauties were connected with all his purest feelings, because he loved it with the love of associations and recollections, and he longed to interest her in his predilections and delights. When one of Stanley's nature loves, everything is linked with their emotion, it becomes an absorbing, enthralling passion, and things which before were unheeded and uncared for, become suddenly invested with importance, from the possibility of their exerting an influence upon their new sensations. When Stanley galloped off to meet the Vernons, as he had promised to do, he thought Marion's painter's eye must be gratified by the picturesque effect of Langston Hall ; as it stood half enveloped in shade, with its deep bay windows, and time-stained walls, a fine specimen of a residence of some ancient English family, equally removed from the style of the modern villa, or more pretentious castle. As he arrived at the park lodge, he heard the

carriage-wheels in the distance, and trotted on to meet them, to prove his readiness to receive his friends. Most cordial were the greetings, and although Marion's might appear the briefest, it did not imply or afford less pleasure than the others.

“Will you leave the carriage here, and walk across the park?” asked Stanley. “There is plenty of shade; I am afraid if you ladies once get into the flower gardens, you will never come away, and therefore I wish to postpone them until the last.”

A willing assent was accorded to the proposal; the carriage was soon abandoned, and Arthur's horse given in charge to the lodge-keeper's son, and the merry party left the drive, and struck across the turf to the more secluded parts of the park, where the ferns grew in wild profusion, and the oaks and beeches rose in noble magnificence, like monarchs of the forest! Beneath their shade a herd of deer was feeding, their elegant forms, and branching antlers adding much to the picturesque effect of the landscape; as our party approached, they raised their graceful heads, and fixing their large

bright eyes upon the intruders, started off to a rising ground at a little distance. Stanley led his companions through this wooded side of the park, until then reached the banks of a stream, over which the willows and graceful ash-trees bent, until their flexile branches touched the dark, still waters ; the large leaves of the water-lily rested on their surface like fairy islands, but their snowy blossoms were not yet expanded ; the lazy trout rose now and then to meet the May-flies which were hovering over the narrow river ; and the swallows flitted rapidly by, now and then dipping their smooth breasts into the wavelets. It was a lovely scene, and many were the exclamations of delight at its beauty ; our rambles strolled along the banks until they arrived at a rustic bridge which connected the park with the gardens.

On one side of these was a very high wall, which had been built many long years ago ; this was covered in wild confusion, with the long branches of pear-trees, which, with utter disregard to order, mingled with the clustering clematis and roses, and here and there the stately magnolia grew like a queen among the

less exalted plants ; this wall sheltered a wide raised terrace, one of the relics of the tastes of our ancestors, and a few old Spanish chestnut-trees, of almost forest magnitude, cast their shadow over it ; winding paths, overhung by acacias and laburnums, led from the terrace to the more modern part of the gardens, which were laid out in the style of the present day, and beautiful they looked with all the rich bloom of the flowers, for which Langston was famed ; for the gardener was a successful competitor for the prizes of the neighbouring Floricultural Society, and although his master had no particular ambition or taste for the fashionable gardening mania, yet he indulged the old man in his rather expensive weakness for displays and medals. Adeline was enraptured with the beauty and perfection of many of the botanical treasures, for since her marriage she had become infected by the anxiety to possess rare specimens of those flowers which were most in vogue, and which were often less intrinsically pretty than those that were less esteemed.

But neither Mr. Stanley or Arthur would

permit any innovations to be introduced in the old-fashioned beds which bordered the terrace, upon which the dining-room and library opened. No fantastic trellis-work, no foreign creepers drooped over the stone mullions and antique carvings of the house; the gloomy ivy, which so fondly clings to the relics of the olden days, and so tenderly throws its mantle over the wrecks which time has made, hung over the windows.

Langston was not a cheerful-looking place, but it was a shadow of antiquity, a proud air of seclusion, which made it differ from the bright elegance and sunny lightness which pervaded Fountain Court.

Marion's busy imagination was peopling the long terraces and shady walks with visions of departed times. She was thinking of the events and changes which the old grey walls had witnessed, and mingling these musings with speculations on the fortunes of him to whom this mansion might one day belong; while Adeline and Vernon were expatiating to Stanley on the merits of some new geranium, when he beckoned to the gardener,

and desiring him to send Mrs. Vernon cuttings from anything she admired, he turned to Marion, who stood near, and asked :

“ Do you think Vernon was right to omit showing you Langston ? Is it not, at least, as well worth seeing as Holton or Shirley ? ”

“ I think it is by far the most interesting place I ever saw, and should have indeed regretted not paying it a visit. There is something about it which makes one think of the past. I like the old terrace and that lawn so much better than this new flower-garden, beautiful as it is ! ”

“ I am so glad to hear you say so, for I was afraid I showed shocking taste in preferring that old-fashioned place to all this flush of brightness. Somehow, this does not seem to harmonize with the building, and I would not have a stone in that altered. I am almost a fool in my veneration for the old place, and I dare say, people often laugh at my taking such pleasure in it, for every one says it is so gloomy. ”

“ It appears to me to have just that mellow shade and tint of age which we all



admire in good paintings ; it looks in such perfect keeping, that I cannot imagine any addition or alteration, but what would destroy its peculiar character."

" It is very fortunate that my father feels just as I do about Langston, or I should be inclined to quarrel with him. You say it speaks of the past : that past, to you, brings fancies of almost another age, and imagination is calling up pictures of those with whom we have no personal interest ; but the past, to me, is connected with memories of my own identity—of passions and feelings, of joys and sorrows. It reminds me of my mother, whom I lost before I could derive much benefit from her tenderness, although it was not so soon that I could forget it. It was here that I have come in my moments of triumph, and here I have dreamed of the future, and lately, I have loved it more for the hopes of my future fate that I have indulged here, than for all its other charms."

The deep, low tone of Stanley's voice called a faint blush to Marion's cheek, though she laughingly answered :

“So you have confessed to day-dreaming, like other mortals, proud and cold as you would try and make us believe you are. I am glad your ambitious struggles have left you a little share of heart still; but although you do put on such a care-for-nothing look, I did not quite believe in your stoicism.”

“I never intended *you* should,” was Stanley’s reply, in such an earnest voice, that any further attempt at raillery from Marion was entirely frustrated. She turned away towards Adeline, who was approaching with a *bouquet* of the choicest flowers, which she held up in playful triumph, as she exclaimed:

“Look at my prize, Marion—won by my appreciation of old Walter’s knowledge and industry. He felt he could not bestow his pet blossoms on any one who would value them more; and I really had to stop his knife, or I should have had a larger nose-gay than I could have carried away. You must come and look at his darling heaths, and perchance he may honour you with such a proof of his regard as mine. Here is Fred, with another handful of fuschia.”

“ Yes, love, Walter insisted on your taking these specimens of the plants he will send you to-morrow ; they will make your conservatory quite gay.”

While Vernon was speaking, Stanley had gathered a few sprigs of myrtle and jasmine, which he offered to Marion, saying :

“ These may not be so rare and precious as Adeline’s, but as they are emblems of truth and purity, they are more suitable to you.”

Marion’s eyes fell beneath the ardent gaze Stanley bent upon her. She stooped to fasten the flowers in her sash, to conceal the bright colour which flushed her cheek. After Adeline had arranged her *bouquet* to her taste, Stanley proposed their adjourning to the house, to which they all acceded ; therefore, they left the terrace, and entered the hall, which was of dark oak, with stags’ horns and old armour hanging on the walls ; a large fire-place, with quaint carvings, which was filled with branches of evergreens, occupied a great part of one side, and two rusty swords were crossed above it. The library opened from it with a massy, heavy door ; the deep-groined windows, with the

carved stone framework, gave a look of richness to the room, which was increased by the oak book-cases and crimson hangings.

Here they found Mr. Stanley, who welcomed Captain and Mrs. Vernon most cordially ; for Frederic had been a favourite with the old gentleman from his boyhood, and Adeline's grace and beauty had quite captivated his fastidious and exacting taste. Arthur watched his father's reception of Marion with an anxious eye ; although he had no doubt but that her gentle, winning manner must please him, yet, with his usual misgiving feelings, he had entertained some fears about this meeting. However, he soon lost these as he saw Marion sitting near Mr. Stanley, and conversing with him much to his apparent satisfaction, and when he saw she stooped to arrange his footstool, and looked at him with her beaming glance of kindness, as he told her she was a careful nurse, Arthur turned away with a throb of joy at his heart.

The old housekeeper was summoned to attend the ladies, while they made their hasty toilette for dinner ; she had been Arthur's nurse, and

was ready to launch forth into high praises of her young master ; Marion listened to the talkative domestic, but let Adeline make all the comments and inquiries, but her silence did not prevent the old lady turning to her while she related his boyish exploits on his pony, or his rash disregard of himself, when he plunged into the river to rescue the gamekeeper's child from drowning. On their return to the library, Adeline went up to Arthur, and laughingly demanded his opinion of her dress : no mortal man could have refused approval of the rich folds of silk, which, fitting tightly, revealed the outline of her faultless figure, or wished for a single ornament on her classically formed head, with its low, loose knot of hair. It was the beauty of the queen of the ancient mythology which stood before him, only wreathed with a smile which she might have stolen from the goddess of love. Yet, while Stanley accorded his warm approval of her appearance, his eye could not avoid glancing at Marion, as she bent over a book of rare engravings, her long curls resting on the pages before her ; the falling drapery of

her light cloud-like dress, the varying hue on her cheek, the clear, pale brow, and the glory of her fair hair, had a more touching, a sweeter influence upon him, than the rich colouring and striking appearance of her sister : one was like the gorgeous embodiment of some Eastern empress, in the flush of her pride and magnificence, and the other like one of the delicately tinted images of the Madonna, which the heaven-inspired Raphael has left us as types of woman's purity and meekness.

While he was picturing to himself Langston under her gentle sway, dinner was announced to put his visions to flight ; he had fully intended taking her to the dining-room, of course giving Mrs. Vernon the precedence and the arm of his father, but he was disappointed, for Mr. Stanley rose and said :

“ Arthur, you must do the honours for me ; I cannot ask Mrs. Vernon, a gay and merry bride, to take her seat by an old, tiresome invalid like me, and I think she will give even your ready wits ample employment to ward off her light shafts. Captain Vernon will take care of Miss Harcourt.”

But Marion offered her arm in such a winning, kind way to Mr. Stanley, that he accepted it with that pleasure which the aged and infirm always derive from the attentions of the young, and when they arrived in the dining-room, he thanked "his new walking-stick," as he playfully called her, so warmly, that it brought the ready colour to her cheek. Disappointed as Arthur was, at losing her from his side, he was more than half consoled when he watched her unobtrusive attentions to his father, and the evident pleasure with which he received them. The sunbeams floated into the windows, and rested on the magnificent pictures which filled the room. Marion's eye wandered frequently to these master-pieces of talent ; her enthusiastic admiration of them evidently affording the greatest pleasure to her host, whose taste and knowledge of art made his conversation most delightful to Marion.

It was a sociable party, for they were all pleased with each other, and anxious to promote the general amusement ; there was no restraint, no formality, Adeline's spirits and Stanley's wit affording subjects for the mirth of all. Arthur

did not indulge in any of his harsh sarcasms or bitter suppositions, for his heart was beating with too warm and devoted feelings to allow him to remember his experiences of the world. True love possesses a softening influence, it pours such a halo of light round all, that angry and jarring sensations are lost in the flood of glory it emits; and if ever one human being loved another with an absorbing, generous passion, Arthur loved Marion Harcourt. How he longed to tell her how dear she was to him; how tenderly he gazed on her, till her eyes drooped beneath his glance, and her almost unearthly expression of purity and peace penetrated his heart.

Adeline suddenly rose to leave the room, to escape some of Stanley's brilliant repartee, and, as he held the door for them to pass, promised him to arrange the drawing-room with some of the comfort and grace which pervaded Fountain Court. But she and Marion went into the garden, and lingered there amid the lovely flowers, listening to the evening songs of the birds in the trees, which were bright in the set-



ting sun, until Adeline, quite wearied, declared she must have a rest upon a sofa ; they therefore passed through the window, which was thrown open upon the lawn, and found themselves in the lofty and spacious drawing-room, where more pictures claimed inspection and admiration. Adeline flung herself upon a couch and tried to persuade Marion to do the same, but she preferred examining the portfolios of valuable prints and sketches which Mr. Stanley had collected abroad. When she had arrived at the last of them, she drew back the drapery at the end of the room, which was already partly raised, and strolled into the large conservatory which adjoined it.

Beautiful, beyond expression, was the collection of flowers there ; the elegant vases entwined with creepers, the globes with gold fish, gave it an almost fairy-like appearance. Marion remained in this atmosphere of sweets until the servants entered the drawing-room with coffee, when she reluctantly left the conservatory, and joined Adeline just as the gentlemen appeared. Twilight was gathering round and above the

trees, some heavy clouds were rising, but so absorbed were all the party that the appearance of the sky was unnoticed until Vernon started up and declared he must order the carriage. When the servant appeared, he brought the unexpected intelligence that a perfect deluge of rain was falling, and asked if they would leave their own open carriage at Langston, and drive home in another; but Mr. Stanley insisted upon their abandoning all idea of leaving him that night, declaring his housekeeper could arrange everything for their accommodation, and, indeed, when they looked from the windows and saw the dense masses of clouds rising like battlements, and heard the rumbling of the distant thunder, they did not hesitate long in accepting the hospitable offer. Many were the jests which Arthur and Vernon made at the expense of the ladies' inconvenient predicament, at being compelled to dispense with dressing-cases, and other necessities, and numerous were the laughable expedients suggested to supersede them. However, by means of the management and ingenuity which seemed

characteristics of good, old servants, it was soon announced that rooms were ready for the whole party, and when, after a merry evening, they took possession of them, they had no reason to complain of any great deprivation of their comforts, and even had they been compelled to recline on sofas instead of the luxurious beds they occupied, they would all have preferred such a mode of passing the night, to confronting the war of the elements, which they heard venting its fury outside the house.

Stanley would have welcomed a hurricane, or whirlwind, or any other monster, if it involved the necessity of Marion's remaining under the same roof with himself, with the prospect of meeting her the next morning, for he hoped then to appropriate rather more of her conversation than he had found an opportunity of doing during the day, which had elapsed without his being able to speak to her alone, excepting the few words that had passed between them on the terrace. And Marion's slumbers were not less peaceful, because the thought of the

morrow was brightened by the hope of being again with one whose words and looks were fraught with such deep interest to her feelings.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Why should love be treated less seriously than death ?  
It is a serious thing. Love and death, the Alpha and  
Omega of human life, the author and finisher of exist-  
ence, the two points on which God's universe turns.

JAMESON.

Hail, holy love ! thou word which seems all bliss,  
Gives and receives all bliss, fullest when most  
Thou givest. Spring-head of all felicity,  
Enduring all, hoping, forgiving all !  
On earth mysterious, and mysterious still in heaven.

POLLOCK.

THERE were no traces of the preceding night's  
storm when Marion threw open her window the  
following morning ; the sun was shining brightly,  
and except from the freshness of the foliage,  
and the coolness of the breeze, one might have

forgotten that the sky had been obscured by clouds. Marion could not resist the temptation of taking a turn upon the terrace, and ascertaining that she had more than an hour to dispose of before the rather late breakfast hour, she passed through the flower-garden to the fine old terrace, where the boughs of the chestnuts threw such a deep shade, that only a sunbeam could here and there penetrate and flicker amid the murmuring leaves; the rain-drops still glistened upon the roses, as if to remind them that they could not always bask in sunshine.

Marion's heart was filled with a calm, peaceful serenity, as she gazed upon all the beauty around her, and if the thought of Stanley's words and manner, the day before, made it beat any quicker, there was a sweet feeling of trust and confidence which calmed all agitation. How different was Stanley's sensations, as he dashed the dew from the grass with his rapid steps, for he had seen Marion cross the garden, and hastened to follow her to the terrace, where he guessed he should find her. He came through

a narrow, winding path, from whence he could see her sauntering along. He was soon at her side, listening to her expressions of pleasure at the loveliness of the morning. Finding himself thus alone with Marion, and nothing to interrupt his feelings of love and tenderness, was rather a dangerous predicament for Stanley ; for although he had enjoyed a *tête-à-tête* walk with her some days before, and had then controlled the impulse of telling her of his love, yet, after the additional spell which her society during the day before had cast upon him, he could not now resist availing himself of the present opportunity.

“How I pity those people,” said Marion, “who lose these pleasant morning hours ; nothing can compensate for their freshness and exhilaration : not even your fault-finding spirit can surely discover any defect to grumble at now ?”

“Indeed, it can ; why are we walking in this unsociable way, as if we were in the conventional haunts of London society ? come, you may take my arm here. I can never talk

half so comfortably when I feel alone. I would not ask you this if any gossiping tongues were near, for although I might be permitted to escort you in a crowded room, yet a thousand reports would be circulated if we were seen doing the same thing in Kensington Gardens; however, I know you are too much above mere form and etiquette to refuse my arm here, when we are in this quiet garden."

"I like it much better; for although of course I must have obeyed the arbitrary dictates of fashion, and declined it in London, I quite agree with you, that it is far more comfortable to have an arm to lean on," replied Marion, as she put her hand in his arm.

"But you cannot talk of finding any support from an arm in the way you take it, for I never know whether you are on mine or not, just touching it with the tips of your fingers; come let me feel you are there," said Stanley, drawing her hand farther on.

"You have droll fancies in everything, I see. I never knew my manner was peculiar; but you must allow it is a more agreeable fault (if



fault it be), than to weary you by leaning on you."

"I do not agree with you, and you ought to know that. I see my flowers are not faded. Do you remember what I told you they typified? Truth and purity—they will last for ever!"

"But I thought you denied that, Mr. Stanley, and maintained that change and decay would blight everything, even such qualities as those—I recollect often hearing such opinions from you!"

"Let us sit on this seat, and hear my recantation; I have retracted those views, and have learned to believe that truth and purity do endure, and to feel that there is a love which would conquer all things. Do you remember telling me that such a thing existed?"

"Yes; how you laughed at me for saying so, and how you warned me not to trust to such a phantom. I am glad though to hear you have abandoned your cold, sceptical creed; are you not the happier for your new convictions?"

“It has given me more to hope for, but I cannot yet tell you whether it will make me happier, you must help me to decypher that enigma. It is dangerous to call up such a power as love in a heart like mine ; it is done, however, and no spell can bid it disappear ; would you advise the expirement?” added he, in a half-stifled tone, as he bent towards Marion, who was playing with the flowers in her lap. After a few moments’ pause, she answered :

“If you find this new feeling is impelling you towards the good and the true, I would not say, uproot it ; but you alone can decide this.” As she concluded, she raised her eyes to his, but the expression she read there, quickly made her drop them again.

“If I tell you that all that is noble and holy has been invested with a dearer interest since my soul woke to one of its highest faculties, I should only be speaking the sober truth, and then you would not bid me despair, would you, Marion ? for you hold my fate in your keeping ! You it is I love, as deeply and

truly as I believe it is possible for one mortal to love another."

Stanley held Marion's hand in his, and he felt it slightly tremble in his grasp, when he added :

"Tell me, dearest, may I hope?—nay, do not turn away. Marion, my love, only one word—one look even? I will not ask for more."

But still the head drooped more, and he could not catch the faintest whisper.

"In pity, Marion, one word; you cannot doubt my sincerity; you must have seen that very soon after our acquaintance how anxious I was for your society, and you cannot be ignorant that I have long loved you, though you cannot know how fond and true that love is; my dearest, only look up."

Marion glanced at him for a second; those sweet eyes were dimmed by a tear, but that did not prevent Stanley's interpreting their expression as he wished. His arm was soon round her, but after one fond embrace he released her, for he would not have pained

her sensitive feelings for worlds, and her embarrassment made him feel that he must control his gratitude and love. He could have scarcely desired a greater share of happiness than to sit beside her, telling her of all his feelings and hopes, and winning her to confess some of hers ; and he was repaid for his self-denial in respecting her reserve by her frank and confiding tenderness. After they had sat together some time, and he had again assured her of his unbounded affection, she murmured :

“ But we must remember, Arthur, what a fearful trust such a love is, for it is not to endure for a few years, or even for life, but for ever, through eternity.”

“ My own dearest, less than that would not satisfy me ; more than that I cannot hope for : ours is not a love born, like that butterfly, just to spread its wings to the sun of a summer’s day, and when the chill dews fall to vanish and die ; but it will strengthen with the storms and blasts of sorrow and adversity, till it shall be deeper than the ocean, and stronger than death.”

“Yet it is a dangerous lesson for one human heart to teach another such undying affection, for its influence must be immortal; and only think if it should be for evil instead of good!”

“Imagine not such a thing for a moment; we will resolve that we will raise ourselves in the scale of being, that we may love each other better; and then who shall dare to say that love is not an ennobling, a sanctifying power? You will have to exert all your influence, sweet Marion, to soften my harshness, and to make me what I ought to be to merit such a treasure as your love; for I know I have a proud, jealous spirit, and sometimes even all your gentleness and kindness would scarcely curb its bitterness; but you will not shrink from me, my own! you will not abandon me, now that you have shown me how love enlightens all trials; you will not cast me back upon the cold shore of doubts and misgivings!”

“Never, Arthur: whatever happens, I am yours, and yours only; and although I think it would nearly break my heart if you were to

doubt me, yet I shall always cling to you, and only believe in your goodness and truth."

"Thank you, love, for this assurance. I cannot help fearing, that when you know me better, you will think you have bound yourself to one who will cause your gentle heart many a sorrow ; but you will be my good angel, and dissipate my evil destiny ; will you not, dear Marion ?"

Her answer was a look of such confiding love and faith, that Stanley could have clasped her to his heart, but he contented himself with pressing her hand to his lips, and retaining it a close prisoner. The sound of the breakfast bell roused them from their dreams of happiness ; and as Stanley placed Marion's hand on his arm, he said :

" Now, dearest, I have a right to claim rather more than the ends of your fingers, therefore don't let them slip off as they did just now, or I must hold them fast ;" and for fear of that happening, Arthur's hand still held Marion's until they reached the flower garden, when he resigned it, leaving on one finger, as a pledge

of that morning's interview, a small antique ring, which he besought her to wear for his sake. Marion entered the dining-room alone, and found to her great relief that no one had yet appeared. The Vernons and Mr. Stanley soon entered, and after a few laughing remarks had been passed upon Arthur's dilatoriness, which made one of the party feel rather confused, he walked in with a bunch of flowers, which he laid by Marion's plate, saying :

“Walter has repented of the partiality he was guilty of yesterday, Mrs. Vernon, and has sent your sister some of his treasure ; you will not be jealous, I am sure !”

“Indeed, I shall not, for I think mine far the prettiest ; but by some miraculous discrimination he has selected all your favourite flowers, Marion. Ah ! I guess you have been taking advantage of my slumbering propensities, and have been paying him an early visit.”

Marion could not resist smiling as she met Stanley's glance at these words, particularly when she saw how large a proportion of her *bouquet* was composed of myrtle and jasmine.

After breakfast Mr. Stanley proposed their visiting the village church, which was very ancient and picturesque, and closely adjoining the grounds of Langston. Such an expedient for passing the morning was readily adopted, and they soon were ready for their stroll. The church was well worth examination, for its situation alone was beautiful. It stood just beyond the park, whose groups of trees formed a graceful background. It was very small, much more so than usual, for the village was composed but of a few cottages ; and the neat churchyard, with its simple tombstones, bore the same confined appearance : it was more like a miniature model than a real building, and yet every part was in perfect order. The pews were of dark oak, and every window was of stained glass, therefore there were no broad streams of cold light, but all was subdued to that solemn tint, which seems to incline the mind to thought and devotion. The walls were covered with memorials of the Stanleys, for they had owned Langston for several centuries, and many of them lay mouldering in the vaults beneath ; although in life they had been wanderers on the



globe—some serving in distant climates as their country's defenders, while others had carried her proud banner upon the waves, yet in death they had yearned to repose in the peaceful church where they had knelt in their early days. Over the large square pew was the most recent tablet, which Marion perceived was to commemorate Arthur's mother, who had died in youth.

As they left the church, Stanley asked Marion if she remembered the Sunday he had spent at Fenton ?

"That was nearly a year ago, love, yet even then, when you thought I was so cold and sarcastic, you were very dear to me, and every hour I was with you strengthened my attachment ; but I did not yield to your influence without indulging many doubts and fears. You cannot understand such waywardness, you are fresh and unsophisticated, you have not seen, as, alas ! I have, how fair many appear, when the reality is but vanity ; you have not learnt the lesson of mistrust and suspicion."

"Do you wish we to study it now, because by your own account you are well qualified to

instruct me ! Which is the first step ? You must initiate me thoroughly, if I am to be such a proficient in the accomplishment as you are."

"Nay, dearest, I hope you may never lose your frank, confiding trust, for you will then entail much sorrow upon yourself ; and oh ! never let a doubt cross your love, for then its perfection will be marred. You must teach me this, not learn my miserable suspicions of human nature ; but they will evaporate under your genial truth."

"But, Arthur, you can never regain the feelings of faith when they are once lost ; believe me, the habit of attributing ungenerous and unworthy motives to others is too inveterate to be entirely overcome ; I shall never expect you to be very charitable in your judgments, which will always make me rather afraid of you."

"You must not say that, Marion dear, or I shall be wretched. Do not you know that 'perfect love casteth out fear?' and I must believe your love is perfect, or I shall not be satisfied."

“ You must not be exacting, or you may be disappointed : it is not good to expect too much. No one can accuse you of backwardness in your demands ; I thought you were more philosophical ! ”

“ As if your dear eyes were not enough to make a man forget there ever was such a word as philosophy ! But you have no right to accuse me of being encroaching, or of making exacting demands, for I consider I deserve great praise for my moderation and self-command, and I must be rewarded by one of your sweet smiles, my own.”

“ Come, we must walk a little faster, Arthur, for Adeline is waiting for us, and they ordered the carriage to be ready on our return, for some people promised to lunch with us to-day, therefore we must leave you almost directly.”

“ You will not forget Langston, love, you must learn to like it as well as I do, for I hope we shall spend many happy days together here ; you will never doom the terrace to destruction, if it be only for memory’s sake.”

“It is the prettiest part of the gardens, to my taste, therefore, I shall always give my vote for its preservation; but, perhaps some day you will wish to remove it, Arthur, because it was a witness to certain protestations of yours this morning.”

“If you wait for your liberation until I wish those protestations unsaid, your bondage is likely to be a long one! There is that tiresome carriage—how I wish I could drive back with you; but I saw such a heap of letters on the library table this morning which I must answer, and in this out-of-the-way place the post goes out so early, that I should not be in time when I came back; and there is one letter which I must send to-day, dearest—can you guess to whom? Don’t you know, I must write and tell Mr. Harcourt what I have been telling you, and ask him to sanction it.”

Arthur and Marion reached the house just in time to prevent Vernon getting impatient at the delay. Marion was obliged to take a very hurried farewell of Mr. Stanley, and after promising to make him a sketch of Langston

before she returned to town, she accompanied Arthur to the carriage ; he tenderly pressed her hand as he bade her adieu, and telling Mrs. Vernon that he should ride over in a day or two to see how the flowers bore their transplantation to Fountain Court, they parted. Marion was rather silent during their drive, but the others were so busily employed in their own conversation that they did not notice her pre-occupation. They found their guests had already arrived when they reached home, therefore Marion had no opportunity of telling Adeline what had passed between her and Stanley ; however, the visitors left before dinner, and when the sisters were strolling on the lawn in the evening, Adeline heard that Marion's faith was pledged.

“ You must tell Frederic, dear,” said Marion when she saw Captain Vernon approaching. “ I must write a letter before tea.” As Marion sat in her room, she saw Vernon and his wife still pacing the lawn, and she knew they were rejoicing in her prospects. When she joined them an hour afterwards in the boudoir, and heard

Vernon's affectionate congratulations, she felt convinced of the sincerity of his regard.

"Well, Stanley is the best of fellows, but he is amply rewarded by winning our Marion," was his remark to his wife, after her sister had retired. "I always despaired of seeing him really in love, but I believe he is fairly caught now. I suppose we shall see him here to-morrow."

"He may trouble himself so far perhaps, but you must not calculate upon his movements by your own warm-hearted impatience, Fred ; for I do not believe Arthur Stanley has much feeling, he always seems so proud and severe. I hope dear Marion may not be hurt by his temper, but if any one can soothe it, she will."

"You never did him justice, my dear ; he is a noble-hearted fellow, and as far superior to me in talent and real worth, as the sun is to the stars ; but I do not wish you to believe this, whatever Marion may do."

"No great danger, as you know ; he is too stern for me, I quite dread that sarcastic smile ; but as you have often said, that would vanish if

he lost his universal doubts ; I shall hope never to see it again."

It was long before sleep visited Marion's eyes that night, memory was too busy with the events of the past day, she felt her doom was fixed, that come what might, nothing could change her feelings for Stanley ; and with a prayer for him on her lips, she at last fell into a peaceful slumber.

## CHAPTER IX.

Then come the wild weather, come sleet, or come snow,  
We will stand by each other, however it blow,  
Oppression and sickness, and sorrow and pain,  
Shall be to our true love as links to the chain.

As the palm-tree standeth so straight and so tall,  
The more the hail beats, and the more the rains fall,  
So love in our hearts shall grow mighty and strong,  
Through crosses, through sorrows, through manifold  
wrong.

LONGFELLOW.

VERNON'S conjectures were verified when he saw Stanley riding up to the house the next morning, and he said to Adeline :

“ You were wrong in fancying Arthur would



not come to-day ; look at the condition of his horse, that betrays the impatience of a lover, although he is now trotting soberly enough, with his usual indifferent manner."

" I confess I did not expect him so soon ; of course you will keep him to dinner, Fred."

When Stanley entered, he was warmly welcomed by Vernon and Adeline ; for the latter forgot the slight coolness she always felt towards him, in her sympathy for her sister. The greetings and congratulations being over, Stanley inquired for Marion, and hearing she was in the garden, he soon followed her. They strolled about together all the morning, indulging the fond hopes and retrospections which are so charming to lovers.

It was a day of calm, heartfelt happiness ; the agitation which had swelled their hearts the preceding day had subsided, the certainty of loving and of being loved had succeeded to the wild impulses of hope, the freshness of faith and trust was blooming in Stanley's breast, irradiating it with a delight unknown before ; no intrusion of the world's interests had yet invaded his ideas since he had received the assurance of

Marion's love ; its cold twilight had not arisen to dim the brightness of his noontide ardour, all was beaming with the glow and beauty of a true affection. How tenderly did he gaze upon his plighted love as she leant upon his arm, how fondly he watched the fleeting colour on her cheek, how every tone and word fell like dew upon his thirsty heart ! He remembered how he had dreamed of such bliss, but smiled to think how poor and faint had been his visions, how far they were surpassed by the reality which now entranced him. And Marion hung upon every word he uttered, and drank in the sweet language of love his eyes were speaking, feeling her very being was becoming absorbed in his ; that her inmost soul was uniting itself by unconquerable bonds to his ; that a whole life would be too short to prove her devotion and affection.

Yet there was an undefinable vein of seriousness, if not melancholy, threading through her feelings, as if they dreaded that such happiness could not last, that it was too pure and lovely to remain unstained by some of the accidents and

influences of the world ; although they might not fear any interruption of it from themselves, could they expect immunity from others ? Still a lofty consciousness of the power of their love throbbled within them, that it would overcome all temptation and resist all corruption, and endure with purified influence throughout eternity. Such reflections may cast a cloud over the brow, yet it is but such a shadow as the wings of a pitying angel would shed in this travelling and sorrowing world, and not the gloom of remorse or the darkness of despair. Such thoughts will not diminish the ardour of love, they will rather ennoble and exalt it ; and far preferable is a passion which can pause and ascertain its own capabilities and destiny, and unshrinkingly accept even a fiery ordeal, than one which is content with only the sweet flowers of a summer existence.

Day after day found Stanley at Fountain Court, learning to love Marion with greater depth and tenderness, and assuring himself that she returned his affection. He had no reason to be dissatisfied with the letter he had received

from Mr. Harcourt, in reply to the one he had written, requesting his sanction to his proposals ; and the affectionate approval Mrs. Harcourt had sent Marion, removed any uneasy uncertainty from those quarters. Indeed, the fondest and most fastidious parents must have rejoiced in the prospect of uniting their daughter to a man with principles and feelings like Stanley's : there could be no scruple about his honour, for that was unblemished ; no demur about his talent, for that was universally acknowledged ; and his worldly position and prospects were undeniably good. Perhaps no one had noticed his slight defect of temper so much as Marion had, and if she did not shrink from it, no one else had a right to offer an opinion on the subject. To her peculiar temperament, the haughty and somewhat irritable disposition of Stanley had a greater interest than if he had been always calm and equable ; she liked to think of soothing and softening him, of warding off all disagreeable and annoying influences ; in fact, of practising all the passive heroism of a loving woman, and almost rejoiced that she might be able to prove

her devotion by some little sacrifices and forbearance..

Had she seen more of the world, she might have known that but too many opportunities would be sure to arise, when all the depths of her tenderness would be needed, without her seeking them ; but this eager enthusiasm, this anxious solicitude to make Arthur happy, were indications of a strength of feeling, an absence of selfishness, which is rarely to be met with. Nothing could exceed Mr. Stanley's satisfaction when his son told him of his engagement to Miss Harcourt, for he had often wished he might see him married before his death ; and had now almost relinquished such an idea, never having seen any symptom of an attachment, and he had heard both Murray and Vernon rally Arthur upon his cold-heartedness and want of susceptibility. Mrs. Vernon sometimes drove Marion to Langston in her pony-carriage, and in some of these visits she fulfilled her promise of sketching it, and had the pleasure of presenting the delighted owner with a spirited water-colour drawing of his picturesque residence. A

view of another part of the grounds was claimed by Arthur : it was to represent the terrace ; and as he superintended its execution, and talked of the associations connected with the subject of the sketch, it may be imagined that some time elapsed before it was finished.

What an inestimable accomplishment is that of sketching to lovers ! For, while the fingers are busiest, the head and the heart may be imbibing enduring influences of love and faith. Stanley and Marion had many rambles in search of a subject for the sketch-book, but after the drawing was commenced, the pencil was often idle, for Arthur was not contented to forego the pleasure of her bright looks on him, and vowed he was jealous of the paper. The first days of love are proverbially idle, if that time can be considered to be idly spent which is employed in making and receiving impressions which are often too deep for any other events to efface. Although Stanley was no artist, his eye was so correct and his taste so good, that Marion's sketches gained much from his suggestions, and her improvement was manifest ; but few re-

membered that her heart was filled with an atmosphere of ineffable happiness, and as few things are more influenced by individual feeling than drawing, where every touch must be inspired by mind, unless it be the merest copyist's work, the new spirit and beauty in Marion's pencil was not to be wondered at, when the master impulse, love, guided it.

All the most exquisite emanations from the artist's hand, owe their magic beauty to this passion in its depth and purity ; for if the heart be untouched by its holy fire, whence can come that inspiration without which no real genius exists ? If it were not for this spirit which still shines on the canvas when all the colours are fading, where would be the life-breathing forms which the illustrious dead have bequeathed to us ? Nothing can explain the mystery of their enduring spell, but the power of that passion which created them ; like the features of some aged person, when time has quenched their vivacity and dimmed their beauty, still wear an almost unearthly lustre, for the warmth and holiness of a love which has outlived the struggles

and battles of life still irradiates them with its spiritual glow. There is nothing else which can survive the disappointments and troubles to which all are liable, except the principle of love. Patience will become exhausted, forbearance will fail, and a mere cold resignation, or stern resolution, will at last involve the soul in the gloom of indifference or the stagnation of apathy.

Stanley was by no means a *fanatico per la musica*, although he occasionally enjoyed hearing a few of Marion's English songs ; but then this must be when every other thing harmonized with them. When twilight came on, he liked to throw himself upon a sofa, near an open window, from whence he could watch the bright tints of sunset fade and die, and the veil of night steal gently over the dim distance, and listen to Marion's rich, low voice, as it breathed some sad and touching melody ; when he was in such a mood, this pleased him much, but when in another vein, music seemed to irritate and annoy him. Often, when Adeline was at the piano, executing with her clear and brilliant



touch, some of the *morceaux* from the operas, he would leave the room in haste, and not return until the sounds ceased.

Those who really love music, who welcome it under all circumstances, and who find it soothes and relieves them at all times, will decide that Stanley had no real appreciation of harmony, when he only sought it as the last drop in his cup of happiness, so that every sense might be gratified, much as a lover of nature feels some part of the beauty of a landscape is missing if he cannot hear the songs of the birds. When Marion saw Stanley lounge away to his favourite window, she never waited for him to ask for music, but opening the piano gently, she sang one or two of his favourite ballads, and then, before he could weary of the sounds, stole to his side to enjoy the charm of his society. Stanley was, indeed, a favourite of fortune, to be loved with the tenderness Marion felt for him.

The days glided on undisturbed by a cloud to mar their tranquil bliss, excepting the remembrance that they would soon be interrupted by

Stanley's departure, for the summer circuit was approaching, and he would not have wished to miss that, even for the temptation of Marion's society, for his love had not superseded his ambition, although it had exalted its aims and purposes ; and Marion would have been the readiest to urge him to exertion had she thought her influence was weakening his energies for the battle of intellect and struggles for success.

I heard of Marion's engagement from Mrs. Colston, and most sincerely did I share her pleasure, and unite with her in good wishes. I hope, kind reader, you have not quite forgotten me in your interest for the characters I have introduced to your regard ! Old man as I am, my sympathies are with the young, in all their burning hopes and aspirations ; I stand aloof on the stage of life, watching the events of its crowded drama rapidly succeeding each other. Ever since I had first seen Marion, she had been one of my favourite *dramatis personæ*, she so strongly reminded me of a fair being who had been the star of my youth, whom I

had loved and lost, that I felt a peculiar interest about her. I had seen her first, calm and tranquil before the breath of an absorbing passion had passed over her ; I had watched the rising interest for another wake the dormant faculties of her being ; and now her whole soul was instinct with life and power, for the magic words had been spoken, and the charm was complete.

I was bound for a country town, not very far from Fountain Court, and I could not resist availing myself of my proximity and calling in, feeling sure of a welcome from its lovely mistress. When I arrived at the end of the avenue, I paused to gaze on the picture before me. You must not be wearied of my telling you so often of the beauties of a garden, for I hope you are not insensible to them, and the grounds of Fountain Court did look especially charming the bright afternoon I was there. Adeline was collecting flowers, and gliding from bed to bed in search of her favourite blossoms ; an elegantly shaped basket, already overflowing with its treasures, was on her arm ; a short, tight-fitting

tunic of dark blue velvet, edged with rich antique lace, and a dress of that indescribable hue which some call claret, and others mulberry, gave her quite a foreign and picturesque appearance. Vernon was lounging in a rustic chair, a newspaper in his hand, but his eyes were following the graceful movements of his wife with pride and admiration. I read no change upon his open features nor in Adeline's loveliness, no deeper feelings seemed to have left their characters upon them, all was as bright as the flood of sunshine which now encircled them.

A little further on, where the shade of an ash-tree reposed, I distinguished Marion on a low seat. Her sketch-book was open before her, but it was evident that she was not drawing. Stanley lay on the grass, at her feet, and was gazing intently at her. The sweet, gentle look which I had always seen upon her countenance, was now deepened; an inexpressible halo, as it were, of tenderness and happiness rested upon her brow, and lighted her eyes; but I wondered most at the changed expression of Stanley's features:

handsome I had always thought them; though the statue-like coldness of the chiselled lip, and the proud defiance of his eye, made many say he wanted animation ; but now the energy which was breathing in every line, seemed to have altered his whole countenance, as much as the Heaven-born spark illumined the Promethean statue !

It was the last day Stanley had, before he began his circuit, and he seemed resolved to fill it with enjoyment. He appeared jealous of every look which Marion turned on any one else, and I am afraid my unexpected appearance at first annoyed him ; but after a few minutes' conversation with them, I joined Adeline and Vernon, who were not so completely absorbed by each other as to regard any messenger from the world without as an obnoxious intruder.

Stanley was most reluctant to leave that night ; he could not summon resolution enough to depart from the scene of the happiness he had enjoyed, but would have lingered like a denizen of Paradise, unwilling to resign the

blessings which hovered over its precincts. Yet it was not for long that they were to be parted : a few weeks, and they hoped to meet again ; but when we are happy, we cannot help wishing the world would rest on its axis, for so intricate are the threads which influence us, that when they are once broken, we can scarcely hope to be able to reunite them, and weave them into the same delicate tissue again. Some chord in the harmony will be untouched, some tint wanting in the picture ; and as Stanley looked back upon the last few weeks of his life, he sighed to think they were passed, and of the numerous chances which might intervene to prevent their return.

So it must ever be ! Life brings its chequered web to us, and we grieve when we find the chalice of its joys has touched our lips, for then we expect to meet its sorrows ; and the dearer have been its consolations, the more shudderingly and despondingly do we turn away from its storms !

Was there anything prophetic in the cloud

which seemed to hang over Stanley, when the hour of parting came? A dark presentiment that he should suffer much, before he again pressed Marion to his heart? I know not. The subtle essence which pervades our being may feel an indefinable foreshadowing of the future, but such mysteries are unaccountable to our understandings.

Marion's last whispered words, "Never doubt me—I can never change," seemed to ring in Arthur's ears, and to calm his heart, as he galloped away towards Langston. Her tears, which had fallen on his hand, were scarcely dry, before, with the stern energy and proud determination of his nature, he had driven away the incubus which seemed to hang over him, and in building up the future, he strove to forget the grief of the present. While Marion, who had endeavoured to be cheerful as long as he was with her, for his sake, was weeping, and most feeling the anguish of parting, he had shaken off the gloom which had overwhelmed him during the last few hours he had spent with her. Such is the differ-

ence between the love and sorrow of a man and woman ; absence from selfishness and anxiety, for the happiness of the object of her affection, always characterises a true-hearted woman !

A few days only were to elapse, before Marion concluded her long visit to Adeline, and returned to town ; an arrangement which was rather welcome to her, for Fountain Court was so intimately connected with associations of Stanley, that she missed him more keenly there than she thought she should do elsewhere. Yet it was with regret that she quitted a place which had been the scene of such happiness ; and parting from Adeline reminded her of the chill and desolating blank she would find at home without her ; yet she had Arthur's letters to anticipate, and they alone would break the monotony and dissipate the want of sympathy and companionship she had felt since Adeline's marriage. For how cheering and comforting are the letters of affection to the sad and yearning heart, which is parted from the being it lives for ! Who shall de-



scribe the influence which 'they possess? who can express themselves in speaking, glowing words on paper? who can rightly estimate the undying power of a letter?

## CHAPTER X.

. I think of thee—I think of thee—  
And all that thou hast borne for me ;  
In hours of gloom, or heartless glee,  
I think of thee—I think of thee !

Thy beauty—helplessness and youth,—  
Thy hapless fate—untiring truth,—  
Are spells that often touch the key  
Of sweet, but mournful thoughts of thee.

ALARIC WATTS.

WHEN Stanley arrived at his chambers in the Temple, he found, among many other letters, one from Murray, which he determined to answer at once ; and as his reply may give us some little insight into his

feelings, I shall insert it at length for your perusal.

“ My dear Murray,

“ You surely would not hesitate an hour in your determination about the appointment to Madras ! I consider you a most lucky fellow to get such an offer, and were I in your place, I should hail such a chance of success ; for as you well know, your popularity in society, added to your rather desultory character, have prevented your distinguishing yourself as one of your talents and acquirements should have done. Perhaps you have hitherto had no very stirring motive to incite you to exertion, or you have found a difficulty in breaking the pleasant trammels of gaiety—the all-important cause of your not holding the position you are entitled to, is best known to yourself ; however, this most fortunate offer must supply you with inducement and opportunity to do yourself justice. Such a chance may not again present itself. You tell me it was as unexpected as eligible, and yet you waver and hesitate, and

call a ten years' residence in one of our best colonies, with an honourable and lucrative situation, 'banishment.' Nonsense, Murray, you have no such binding ties to the old country, as to oblige you to let the tide of opportunity ebb without availing yourself of it? You would not doubt about leaving England if the fancy had struck you of exploring the East again; then why delay when an opening is ready for your talents, and the goal is success?

" Friends you have, and I am proud to rank myself among their number, who must regret your absence, yet most selfish would they be to hint at your declining the appointment; ten years soon pass, and then you will, I hope, return to us crowned with wishes accomplished. I dare say visions of overwhelming heat, and sundry other disagreeables occur to you; but what are such annoyances when you have a field for your energies, and legitimate opportunities for distinguishing yourself? I would rather a hundred times endure such privations than vegetate in an objectless existence, or, worse still, with the will and the

wish to get on, to find insuperable circumstances against me.

“And another inducement for accepting this appointment, is the matter-of-fact one of making a fortune; as you managed to spend nearly all your own, before you thought about such a thing as future prospects, you have often found the want of it since, especially when you have indulged your fancies for domestic happiness; and this effect of your early extravagance will always cling to you, if you pursue the do-nothing life you have hitherto led. You talk as if you would like to commit matrimony some day or other, and unless you make money one of the chief qualifications of the lady, I do not see how you could indulge in such an expensive luxury; whereas, if you seize the chance before you, you may make your proposals to any of the young ladies you have laid siege to, and I have no doubt they will surrender at discretion. I have now used all my arguments to induce you to follow my advice, and I shall be indeed anxious to hear how you have determined; but I will not doubt,

you cannot throw away such an opportunity, which would be ever haunting you with tantalizing visions of what might have been, had you acted differently. And then the additional advantage of not being obliged to start immediately, is a great thing in favour of the scheme, and one which pleases me most especially ; for I hope, before many months are gone, to claim your long-given promise of attending my wedding—a promise which I suspect was given without much expectation of your ever being called upon to fulfil it.

“ Yet so it is ; and I am the most madly happy of mortals. You must know who is my promised bride, for I believe you guessed my secret before I scarcely owned it to myself. How little did I dream, when you used to talk to me of Marion Harcourt, that she would prove to be the missing portion of my soul ! I was irresistibly attracted to her the first evening we met, and her influence has increased ever since ; though, how often did I strive to throw aside the spell she had flung around me, how I recalled my experiences of the heartlessness

and vanity which I fancied universal, how I used to torment myself with suspicions and doubts, how sternly have I scrutinized every word and look. When away from her, I have questioned her genuineness, and hesitated about her sincerity; but when I have looked into her clear, soft eyes, and read the truth and purity which dwell there, all misgivings vanished, and I would have staked the universe upon her merits. Finding her at Fountain Court when I left circuit, settled my fate, and I have been sunning myself in her presence ever since, flinging away all else to lounge away the bright summer days in the heartfelt happiness of the early days of acknowledged love. You, who have so often hovered from flower to flower, and indulged in the excitement of flirtation, fancying you really felt *la belle passion* can form no idea of the bliss, the all-pervading influence of my experience of love, for I have never indulged in its frothy imitations, nor felt any evanescent, transitory attachments. To know I possess the real affection, the entire confidence of such a warm-

hearted being as my Marion, seems so completely to realize all my dreams of happiness, that I almost tremble sometimes and fancy it is too bright to last. But away with such forebodings! I cannot doubt her love, and while I possess that, nothing can make me utterly wretched.

“I go circuit to-morrow, for I have some heavy business on hand. I shall run up to town whenever it is practicable, if but for a few hours, so you may expect to see me ere long. Marion is an excellent correspondent, her letters are like herself, unaffected and sincere, no pretence of being in what is called a *good style*, which always means studied composition; but she writes so easily, that I could almost fancy I were chatting with her when I read her letters. There is nothing so charming as a lady’s correspondence, when it is written in this way; they go into such details, and make you understand their feelings so completely. How differently I write; I seem as if I could not express myself fluently. You know I was never very fond of scribbling: I never had the habit



of letter-writing, but I am now acquiring it ; and as Marion declares every line interests her, I am encouraged to persevere.

“ My father has acted like a trump throughout the affair, and has forwarded my views in every way. He has increased my allowance so handsomely that, with my professional income, I shall be able to live most comfortably in town, and then he says Langston will be always ready for us whenever we choose to go there. He would wish us to reside always with him, but I could not do that without great inconvenience to my pursuits, and I cannot sacrifice my ambition ; besides, fond as I am of the country, I do not think I could always live there. I have been so long accustomed to London life, that I should almost stagnate if I gave it up entirely. My father is very fond of Marion, and I think it is his anxiety to have her gentle influence always near him, which makes him wish us to decide upon our head-quarters being Langston. But, besides my repugnance to leaving London, I am very independent in my ideas, and I should like to be master of my own

house, to feel I was the ruling power ; and this could never be at Langston. I should always fancy myself a visitor, and, notwithstanding my father's kindness, I should not like the feeling. He understands me thoroughly, and I am sure considers I am right in principle ; had he been placed in similar circumstances, he would have acted as I do. We shall be often at Langston, for you know how fond I am of the old place. Marion declares she likes it better than any house she ever saw. How I long to see her portrait in the gallery ; but that must not be, until she has become a Stanley in name.

“ The Vernons still say they are pleased with Fountain Court, but I cannot help thinking that they are getting a little tired of it ; they are terrible lovers of excitement ; I should not be at all surprised if they go abroad this winter. Mrs. Vernon has never been in Italy, and she has a decided fancy for a season at Rome. She is popular in our neighbourhood, and looks uncommonly well ; but she is too handsome for everyday life. I should hate my wife to be stared at

by every one, and to become a belle, which Mrs. Vernon most certainly is, *malgré* her being married; however, Vernon seems to acquiesce most amiably in the state of things, therefore, of course, no one else has a right to complain. And one cannot exactly say that Adeline *flirts*, at least not in the common acceptation of the word, for she is very dignified in all that sort of thing; but it is the consciousness of power which gives her that air; she knows how beautiful she is, and that there is no occasion for her to take any trouble to captivate; but there is a something in her manner and expression which makes me feel that she takes pleasure in the influence she possesses. Warrenne has been in the neighbourhood, and raves about her. You know he always used to admire her before her marriage, now he seems devoted to her, but of course he is too much a man of the world to make a fool of himself; few but those who observe as keenly as I do would notice his enthralment. Adeline treats him *en reine*, yet I do not think her manner quite simple and sincere enough to show him his position; in

fact, there is a degree of a coquetry about her which misleads her, fond as I believe her to be of Vernon. She has the feminine weakness of vanity largely developed, and I suppose Warrenne's admiration, which is evidently observed by her, is too gratifying to be totally disregarded.

"You may be thankful, my dear fellow, that Vernon married her, for she would not have made you happy: you are exacting, and would have resented a smile given to any one else. I am glad you do not seek her society, for with your weakness for the beautiful, and the *prestige* of a former feeling for her, I am afraid you would soon have been a worshipper at her shrine; and this ought not to be, a coquette is a heartless being, and a married coquette is odious and despicable; and Mrs. Vernon is a coquette in reality, although perhaps not yet arrived at perfection! They are very pleasant neighbours, yet I am not sure that I shall like them always as such; you know how jealous I am of the undivided affection of those I love, and when Marion is my wife, I shall even

quarrel with the love she showers upon her sister. I shall want to keep her all to myself, and another thing is, that I shall often disapprove of Mrs. Vernon's sentiments and conduct, and Marion will try to excuse and justify her, and this, I fear, will be the cause of some difference of opinion between us. I suppose I must soften my ideas, or at least be cautious in my expression of them; for I see how even the mildest censure of Adeline hurts Marion, and I would shield her from every annoyance, for she never thinks of herself, and gives up everything to me.

“I am in a fair way to become a tyrant, for I meet with no opposition, and yet I flatter myself I am not selfish enough to take advantage of such generosity, but shall be able to prove how I value it. You must congratulate me, Murray, upon my happiness, for it is greater than I could have imagined; I am forgetting all my bitterness and harshness, and learning experiences of the bright side of human nature; for who could indulge in miserable doubts and suspicions when they are as

blest as I am ! You will smile at my rhapsodies, and think love has wrought a wondrous change in my character : it has, in truth, and I would not efface the change for the possession of the Indies ! everything wears another aspect, and seems animated by a different spirit. The poets say love is the soul of the world, and I feel now as if my former life had been really passed without the influence of a soul ; and now that I really love, I have found one, like the lovely spirit in the beautiful German tale ! But mine is not a tranquil, peaceful affection, I am not capable of that perfection of feeling ! I fear if circumstances were not so propitious, I should doubt and fear, instead of trusting implicitly ; but I am so unspeakably happy, that I do not think I would alter a line of my present fate. The future—but let that be, it is impenetrable ; and why should we be always merging the present into the future, losing what is given to us richly to enjoy ? I know Marion will never allow anything to make her doubt me ; she has such perfect faith, such sweet, confiding trust in me, that if the entire

world were against me, she would disbelieve its testimony, and love me still. With such a guardian angel, one might combat impossibilities, and not despair.

“What a volume I have written you! Do not ever say a word again about my laconic epistles, this would give me a reputation for letter writing, if I never wrote another; but with such a subject, one might expatiate for ever! I make no apologies for telling you of my prospects, for we are too old friends for such formalities, and have shared too many scrapes and successes from school-days until now, to doubt the sincerity of our sympathy.

“You have often told me I, should never meet with any one who would realize my boundless requirements as a wife; but I say, Marion surpasses my dreams, and my reason and observation confirm what my feelings suggest. You know since my mathematical fever of College, I have ever been fond of demonstrations, and have looked for proof and confirmation of all my positions.

“I hope I shall see you somewhere on circuit, as I shall be anxious to talk over your future plans, for I will not for a moment doubt your acceptance of the Indian appointment. I suppose you will not do much in the way of business; but you may as well join me at Sherington, and occupy your old rooms, or I do not know when we shall meet. Till then adieu.

“Ever yours,

“ARTHUR E. STANLEY.”

Murray could not resist a smile when he read this letter. To find the cold, stern Stanley, so unmistakably in love, and trying to persuade himself that he had rigidly adhered to his old principle of proving and ascertaining facts, when he resigned himself to the indulgence of love.

Murray acknowledged that Stanley merited his happiness, as he had never frittered away his feelings, or trifled with those of another; and an accusing voice arose within his own



heart when he remembered how utterly selfish had been his conduct in such respects. Many memories of evenings spent in endeavouring to gain an interest in a woman's feelings haunted him, when he had said and looked all in his power to convince her of his sincerity, without irrevocably committing himself; and this not with one or two, but with many.

One vision constantly recurred to him, of a lovely girl he had known many years ago, to whom he had devoted himself with even more than his usual assiduity during a whole shooting season, and afterwards through nearly all a spring in London. She was introduced, and, according to Murray's usual habit, he had selected her for his object for attention. He had been the first to attract her notice, and innocent of the fashions of the world and practices of society, she had believed him sincere, and, unconsciously perhaps, had loved him with all the ardour of a first affection. He could not banish the expression of her dark eyes from his memory. When she saw him devoting himself to another with the same *empressement* he had

shown to her, he could not forget the change in her spirits, the fading of her beauty, when she fully realized that she had given her heart for only the semblance of affection ; and when he had since met her, the cold, spiritless woman told his experienced eye the tale of the unrequited love of girlhood. It was years now since he had seen her, and yet he had never forgotten the brightness of her beauty when he first knew her, nor its rapid change ; when others were wondering at the departure of her early bloom, he alone could have told the cause, he alone knew it was the blight on the heart which had destroyed the halo of loveliness which had encircled her.

As he sat in his chambers, and mused on this passage in his life, he half wished he could see her again ; he had an undefined desire to know if he were still remembered, for with all the selfishness of such a man's nature, he would fain still be loved, even by her he had deserted. He almost resolved to call on her brother, who was an old College friend, when he next went

near his rectory, with the excuse of saying farewell before he left England ; and as he knew his sister resided with him, he thought he might soon discover whether her early feelings were entirely obliterated. He had felt more real affection for her than he had for any of the objects of his numerous flirtations, yet he had deserted her to sun himself in the glances of some fashionable belle ; and now, when he longed to have some one to value him, he recurred with a lingering tenderness to the thought of her to whom he knew he had been dear. He threw himself back in his chair, and took up the evening paper, and was carelessly glancing down its columns, in that vacant way which one turns over a newspaper when the thoughts are occupied, when a few words struck his eye, and arrested his attention : it was the name of the lady of whom he had been thinking that evening. He read the paragraph hastily, then crushed the paper with bitter feelings—in the list of deaths was that of Clara Ashley, of consumption, aged 26. How he reproached himself, how heartless his conduct

appeared, how he pictured her faded cheek and sunken eye, and pitied her early doom ; for Murray had feeling, although the world had hardened him, and made him selfish. This incident affected him more than he would have cared to acknowledge to any one ; the coincidence of seeing the notice of her death just as he had been thinking of her, struck him.

What strange coincidences happen to us through life ; if we were to keep an account of them, what marvellous events we could relate, surpassing the most extraordinary histories of destiny and fatalism which could be invented. In Murray's experience, this night's feelings were noted deeply, and the self-reproach he felt, often arose as a monitory influence when temptation afterwards assailed him.

He determined to join Stanley on circuit, to tell him he had accepted the appointment, and that he thought of spending the winter in Italy before sailing for India, which he could easily manage, as he was not obliged to go there before

the spring. What a change had arisen in his prospects, he almost felt as if his identity were altered ; for it is our hopes and our aims which stamp our character : take them away, and we are different beings.

## CHAPTER XI.

Oh! there is something sublime in calm endurance, something sublime in the resolute, fixed purpose of suffering without complaining, which makes disappointment oftentimes better than success.

LONGFELLOW.

As one by one thy hopes depart,  
Be resolute and strong.  
Oh! fear not, in a world like this,  
And thou shalt know, ere long,  
Know how sublime a thing it is  
To suffer and be strong!

LONGFELLOW.

I AM going to take you again into a court of justice. You must not be impatient at this, for it was the appointed arena for my hero, and I want you to understand him

as he really was ; therefore, you must not expect me to describe him in romantic scenes, but amid the turmoil and struggles of life.

Fortunately, the rage for the ultra-romantic school of literature has subsided. It is not absolutely necessary for the success of a fiction, that it should relate nothing but marvellous incidents and improbable results—that spectres and supernatural influences should form part of its mechanism ; nor that the hero should be a noble knight, decked with all the advantages of person, and all the factitious brilliancy of rank and position ; or that the heroine should be a faultless beauty, the victim of the tyranny or villainy of all around her.

A better taste has arisen, and the novelist is allowed to portray characters in more natural situations, and to trust, by the delineation of those feelings and motives which are experienced by many, to excite an interest in his creations. It is a pity, that in the reaction which naturally followed the high-flown ro-

mances of the early part of the century, some authors have chosen their characters from the very dregs of humanity, and have described scenes which are too revolting for the pen to perpetrate; and even the brightness of genius has condescended to throw its dazzling lustre around characters which would have only called forth painful disgust, had they not been illuminated by the talent of their author.

However, there is a spirit abroad which will not rest satisfied with such pandering to our worst tastes and passions; there is an appreciation of the True and the Beautiful, which will be gratified; and even though incidents and scenery may be common-place and unexciting, if the feelings and inner mechanism of human nature be faithfully represented, struggling onwards and upwards against weakness and sin, there are many who will welcome such productions.

Although some maintain the opinion that poetic feeling has departed—that it has no longer a place in this noisy, busy country—



that we shall have no more of those Heaven-illuminated spirits among us who have left their inspirations for our love and admiration, this is but a false and unsound view ; for the True and the Beautiful can never die—their influence is immortal, and in the progress and enlightenment of humanity their existence is strengthened, and their importance recognized. Even now, the wings of true poesy are brooding over the chaotic mass of conflicting intellects and ideas, and will at last plume themselves with renewed power, from the energies and capabilities which are arising on all sides.

But you will wonder at this long digression from Stanley and the court of justice, with which I was beginning this chapter. You must excuse the musings of an old man, who cannot help mingling his own feelings with his narrative of events, which happened long ago ; for when I look back to the days in which I have endeavoured to interest you, I feel astonished at all the changes which have taken place, and most of all, of those in my

own identity, and go on recording my fancies and experiences, instead of strictly adhering to the thread of my story. This diffuseness and want of continuity are the faults of old age, and are among the warnings to tell me that my seed-time has passed—that the autumn of life is at hand, “when the silver cord shall be loosed, and the golden bowl broken.”

I will now forget myself, and tell you of the crowded court, on a hot afternoon in July, where Stanley was deeply interested in conducting a most important cause, which involved the possession of a large estate, about the title of which some question had been lately started. I have a letter among my papers describing the events of that day, so that I am in no danger of forgetting them; but I shall relate them to you in the half-narrative, half-personal manner, I find most congenial to my thoughts.

The counsel for the prosecution had just finished a subtle and powerful speech, stating the grounds for opposing the claims of the pre-

sent occupier of the disputed estate, which had evidently produced a marked effect upon the court, for it had been spoken by a leading man, one who knew what would *tell* upon the jury, who was perfectly aware on what points to dwell, and which to keep in the background ; and, in addition to this technical knowledge, as it may almost be termed, he had the gift of eloquence—that is, of using appropriate language and ideas, more than in indulging in any brilliant declamation, or flights of fancy ; in fact, his speech was clear, logical, and sensible—one of those so difficult to contravert, because there was nothing for an antagonist to ridicule, no marked points for him to attack.

Stanley felt much interested in the decision, for besides the professional anxiety for success, he knew how much the happiness of his client depended upon the issue. It was, therefore, with a sensation of additional responsibility that he arose to answer the opposing counsel. He admitted the ability of his learned brother's speech, but soon began to dissect it most rigo-

rously, and by producing unexpected witnesses, caused no slight consternation in the enemy's camp. While he was in the midst of this speech, a sealed paper was handed to him, with the word "immediate" upon it. Thinking it might have some reference to the business he was engaged in, after bowing to the judge, he opened it.

How eagerly every eye was fixed upon his countenance as he read the note, endeavouring to gain some idea of its contents by his expression; that it conveyed unpleasant information none could doubt, from the firm compression of his lips and the sudden blanching of his cheek. The opposing party seemed to imbibe confidence from this apparent discomfiture of the defendant's counsel, excepting the leader, who had been observing Stanley with all the intensity and keenness of which he was capable. He felt convinced that the intelligence had no reference to the trial; he soon saw that two minutes had sufficed for him to master the contents of the note, and that now, while his eyes were fixed on it as if still reading, he was in reality

battling for composure and deciding his steps. After a few minutes' pause, Stanley apologized to the judge for his delay, and, hastily writing a few words, he gave them to the messenger who had brought him the note, and then, after an instant's silence, resumed his speech ; and if his opponents had been expecting to gain any advantage from his momentary emotion, they were most entirely disappointed, for Stanley never appeared more calm or more completely master of himself ; and as he proceeded in his speech, and reasoned with the most clear acuteness, and with the most able analysis reduced the objections on which the trial was founded to perfect uselessness, and concluded with the most finished piece of oratory, all felt that he had fully proved the justice of his client's cause ; and when the jury pronounced the verdict in his favour, an universal murmur of applause filled the court. After the first minute of excitement was over, several of Stanley's friends turned to congratulate him, but he was gone ; he had just waited to hear the verdict, and then leaving the court in haste, had mounted his horse which was waiting, and had

galloped off without a moment's delay. This was all that could be learnt of his movements, and many were the surmises of the cause of his disappearance. However, his servant soon sought Murray, who was in the town, and gave him a packet, which explained the mystery; it contained the note which Stanley had received during the trial, and which proved to be from the old butler at Langston, in these words :

“ Dear Mr. Arthur,

“ My honoured master was taken seriously ill last night, with a sort of fit; he has been speechless since. Pray come over at once, for the doctors give no hope. I have sent the carriage to the station, to be in readiness whenever you may arrive.

“ Your faithful, humble servant,

“ JOHN WATSON.”

Stanley had written in pencil at the back, “ My horse to be here punctually in an hour.” This he left for Murray, as an explanation of his

absence ; and very soon all his friends were acquainted with the news, and wondering at the self-command and composure he had displayed. But no one could tell the effort it had been to him to crush back his feelings and to overcome his agitation : in his first impulse he would have left the court and abandoned his cause, but an instant's reflection showed him that such a step would inevitably ruin his client ; and considering how much depended upon his exertions, he resolved to strain every faculty to forget his own personal affairs, and, as it were, transfuse himself into the business before him. With clear rapidity of thought he arranged his plan, and remembering a train would start in an hour's time, determined if possible to avail himself of it ; and then, knowing nothing else could be done, he devoted every energy to his speech. There was something of classic heroism in such perfect command over the emotions, and argued well for the intellectual training of the man, who could keep his reason and will so free from the influence of the feelings. His client could never sufficiently appreciate the stoical firmness which

had gained him the victory over fraud and wrong ; no one could realize what the struggle had been, for Stanley was extremely fond of his father, and every minute seemed an age until he should be by his side, especially as the servant's letter caused him to fear that any delay might make him too late ever to find him alive.

Yet as he dashed up the street to the terminus, there was a proud consciousness in his heart that he had not failed in the hour of trial, a feeling that he was completely master of himself, a sensation which ever raises us in the scale of self-estimation ; for what can lower or degrade us more than to know that we are not capable of regulating our own impulses, or commanding our own wills ? Stanley had always endeavoured to obtain this victory over himself ; and when indignation, or feeling, or passion had so excited him as to send the eager blood with rushing swiftness through his veins, he had pressed his finger on his pulse, and while its wild throbbings were proving how vehemently he was moved, he had a stern



pleasure in controlling all demonstration of his agitation, and in restraining himself until calmness and reason regained their sway. There is a pride and gratification in physical power, in the capability of bearing fatigue or pain, in the muscular strength which gives a man the mastery over his fellows ; but in the moral endurance and mental nerve, there is a higher sense of superiority, as far as the spiritual transcends the material ! This is very different to the apathetic coldness of him who does not feel strongly, and should never be confounded with it, for such natures are as opposed as light and darkness. A temperament like Stanley's, with the curb he maintained over it, was one which was capable of the noblest conceptions and highest deeds.

When he was seated in the railway-carriage, being whirled rapidly on, the strong impulse which had incited him to exertion and control in the court was gone ; he had forgotten his anxiety, his arguments, and his success in the shock and surprise of his father's illness. For it was but two days previously that he had

received a letter from him, written in his usual health and spirits ; and now, when he reflected that there was only a shadow of a chance of seeing him alive, the memory of all his kindness rose with a sense of choking to Stanley's throat. How many times he consulted his watch with all the impatience of suspense ; and the speed of the engine, which had often seemed marvellous to him, now appeared sluggish and slow, compared to the rapidity of his wishes ! Yet, as he saw the long, low outline of the station appear, he dreaded to arrive there, lest his worst fears should receive confirmation. Such is the inconsistency of our being, that while we are in suspense, even the worst reality seems as if it would be a relief ; yet when we are on the eve of knowing certainly, we shrink from its iron grasp, and would fain retreat into the dim cloud-land of doubt.

Stanley soon discerned one of his servants on the platform, watching for him with anxious eyes, and descending hastily from the carriage, soon learnt that no change had taken place in his father's state.

“The carriage is waiting, Sir, the other side of the station. We hoped you would arrive by this train, so Mr. Watson desired we should be ready to start immediately,” said the servant.

“I have brought my horse with me, for the bridle-road is nearer. Just see about bringing it round, and you drive home at once; I shall be there before you.”

Stanley recoiled from the idea of an hour's solitary drive when he was in such a state of impatience. Nothing irritates an energetic, impulsive nature so much as being compelled to remain in inaction when every fibre is quivering with anxiety; therefore the prospect of a hard gallop was quite a relief to him. A few minutes only elapsed before he was in his saddle, and crossing the fields with fiery speed. He well knew every turning, and every piece of ground, for he had often followed the hounds in this part of the country; and as he rushed on with more than huntsman speed, a spectator, ignorant of his motives, would pause to gaze with wonder at such a reckless rider.

When he left the station at this rapid pace, the footman said to the old coachman, who had grown grey in the service of the Stanley family :

“ Mr. Arthur might well declare he should be at home before us. Look how he is tearing along.”

“ Ah ! Thomas, the young master be a famous rider, though I says it who shouldn’t, for it was I what learned of him, when he was quite a little chap ; and from the first time he was put on his pony to ride round the big field, near the old lodge, he was never afeard, but would gallop about, and laugh at his nurse, who was frightened to see him ; and after a little while he would climb upon the pony without any saddle, and ride like anything. At last he must have a pair of spurs ; and much as I was afeard of anything happening, I could not go against his coaxing ways, for he was always teasing me to buy him a pair ; so at last I brought them to him, and he was so pleased and grand-like, that I stood watching him as he galloped about. Well just as he was in

the midst of his fun, his mamma comed into the field to see him. She was a dear, good lady, that she was ; you never seed her, Thomas ?”

“No, but my mother was her maid, you know, and I have often heard her talk about her. She was so fond of her.”

“Ay, Thomas, and so was we all ; and many was the sad hearts when we seed how pale and thin she grew, and how slow she walked ! Well, as I was saying, she comed into the field to see the young master, for she was so precious fond of him, that she was never easy when he was away from her, and she stood watching him with such a proud look on her face, until he see’d her, and came galloping up, and reining in his pony, he jumped off to kiss her, but she soon caught sight of the spurs, and how frightened she did look ! Master Arthur tried to make her believe that there was no danger in them, and as for the pony hurting him, he could not understand such a thing ; he talked fast and loud, for, you see, the spurs was new things, and he couldn’t

give them up, and the thought of any risk, I think, rather pleased him ; besides, when he was opposed, he didn't like to give in ; however, when he see'd the tears in his mother's eyes, he yielded and told me to take them off and keep them carefully, and after promising he would not put them on again without asking his father, he hugged his mother, and scrambled on his pony and was galloping it again. But I know'd it was a hard struggle to give up the spurs, for he sighed when I took them away, and often he used to come and look at them, but nothing could make him put them on, for he wouldn't have broke his promise, no, not for anything, and as he was a little fellow then in frocks with curly hair, I thought it was a brave thing of him, not to forget his mother's wishes."

" Folks do say, that Mr. Arthur be like his mother ; but the fine, big picture in master's room, look more gentle like than him," said Thomas.

" When he was a boy, before his hair got so dark, I often said he was like the good lady

that's gone ; but when he com'd back from foreign parts, he looked stern and grave, and now I don't think he be like my poor, dear mistress."

" Did you see how he frowned when I brought round the horse ? and his cheeks was so pale, and he scarcely answered when I told him about poor master."

" Ah ! Thomas, but that was because he was too proud to show what he was feeling ; I saw the tear in his eye as he galloped off, for though he do look so cold and high, his is a kind heart, and he be not like the young Squire down at Rawdon Hall, who was always looking forward to his father's death, that he might have all the property, and now look what wild work he is making there. I know Master Arthur be quite different to that, and he will grieve sadly about the master."

Arthur was right in thinking that by riding he should reach Langston before the carriage, for when the coachman drove into the stable-yard, he found that Stanley had arrived nearly half an hour before, and to judge from the

state of heat and foam in which the horse was found, it must have been ridden furiously. The groom said, Mr. Arthur had led it up the avenue, fearing to ride fast there, lest the sound of its hoofs should reach the house ; that he had brought it to the stables, had flung the bridle to him, and walked on without a word ; but there was no remark made upon this change from Arthur's usual courteous manner, for all saw how he was suffering, and the most vulgar-minded feel respect for grief, held in such stern self-control ; for like the veiled figure in the ancient temple, the mystery of its concealment but increases the force of its expression.

Orders soon came from Arthur that some one should ride to Fountain Court with the intelligence of his father's illness, for he knew that the rumour would soon get afloat, and he did not choose that Vernon should hear of it from any but himself, especially as Marion might be misled by reports. With the ready friendliness of Vernon's disposition, he resolved upon going back with Stanley's messenger ; and



notwithstanding Adeline's unwillingness that he should leave her alone, for almost the first time since their marriage, he lost no time in making arrangements for going to Langston. Finding the servant's horse was weary, he ordered a pair of his own should be put to the phaeton, and drove back, pondering in silence upon the sudden changes and chances of life, while the clear brightness of the summer sky faded, and the gentle veil of twilight arose; the avenues were dark and gloomy as he passed through them, for before he reached Langston the stars might be seen in the deep blue heavens.

## CHAPTER XII.

Passions are hush'd before that stern repose,  
Two and two only, sad exception share—  
Sorrow and love—and these are paramount.  
How deep the sorrow, and how strong the love !

L. E. LANDON.

And but for that chill, changeless brow,—  
Yes, but for these—and these alone,  
Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,  
He might still doubt the tyrant's power ;  
So fair, so calm, so softly sealed  
The first, last look by death revealed.

BYRON.

VERNON was shown into the library, where a lamp was burning, the light of which did not suffice to destroy the deep shadows which

enveloped the lower end of the room. The window was open, but the sultry air brought no freshness, for the flame burnt as calmly and steadily as if guarded from any draught.

Mr. Stanley's desk and newspapers lay on the table as usual, and even the book he had been reading when taken ill was still open; everything around spoke of the kind old man; and Vernon felt oppressed when he thought that he might never sit again in that room!

The house was almost unnaturally quiet. He listened anxiously for some sound, but in vain; it was the unearthly hush which severe illness brings, when we are trembling with the fear of the coming presence of Death. He took up a book, but the letters were as soulless, voiceless hieroglyphics: he could not connect an idea with the sentences; therefore, laying it aside, he turned to the window, and gazed into the vast immensity of night—into that “deep sea of azure” above, where the truth of the spirit of beauty and eternity which pervades this universe is written so legibly, and which

makes itself visible to almost every man, at some period of his existence, even if but for a fleeting moment.

At last, he heard a step on the stairs, the door was gently opened, and Arthur appeared. The friends' hands were mutually grasped in silence. After a few minutes, Stanley said :

"This is kind of you, Vernon ; I did not expect to see you here, to-night."

"My dear fellow, I thought I might be of some use ; at all events, I could not bear to be in suspense and ignorance. Has any change taken place?"

"None. My father has not spoken since last night ; he seems to be in a sort of stupor, a kind of half-consciousness. When he saw me, there was a gleam of intelligence in his eyes, but it was only momentary ; and since that, he has been apparently sleeping. The doctors say, perfect quiet is indispensable, but give only the faintest hope for him."

"How sudden this has been ! Two days

ago, when Adeline and I were riding, we met him taking his drive; he spoke as heartily and cheerily as ever, and wanted us to return to dinner with him. Your message, this evening, was quite a shock to us, for we had heard nothing of Mr. Stanley's illness."

"I was afraid you would be told of it, and feel hurt at my neglect in not sending to you; but, indeed, I am sorry you have come here so late, for I must not stay with you: I cannot bear to leave my father, when there is such a solemn prospect at hand of our being parted by that stern reality, death, from whose decree there is no appeal. I feel as if I must not lose a moment while he is still here."

"But is he not sleeping?"

"Yes, but his spirit is here. I am still with him, although he does not speak. You will excuse me, I know, Vernon. Ring for coffee, or anything you wish for, and my room is quite at your service, for I shall not leave my father to-night. I will send to you, if any change takes place."

"I will go up with you. Now do not hesi-

tate. I will not make a sound ; at all events, let me go to his door. I can stay in the dressing-room for an hour or two ; and then, if you do not want me, I will go."

Stanley led the way up stairs. They passed through Mr. Stanley's dressing-room, and gently opened the door, which led from it into his bed-room. They paused at the entrance, for the old housekeeper, who was sitting there, put her finger on her lip. Arthur went to her, and finding his father was sleeping more calmly, as the heavy breathing was easier, desired her to go to rest, while he watched the invalid. Vernon threw himself on the sofa, in the ante-room, waiting lest anything might be required ; but all remained still. In about an hour's time, he went again to the door, and stood silently there, gazing into the tranquil chamber. The small night-lamp threw a flickering light around, so that he could distinguish the flushed and feverish countenance of the sick man upon his pillows ; the curtains were pushed aside, to admit all the air that was possible, and by the bedside sat Arthur, pale

and stern, with his hand clasping his father's. As Mr. Stanley unconsciously groaned in his sleep, he bent over him, and by gently moving his pillow, strove to make him more comfortable.

There is something exquisitely painful in listening to the sounds of suffering from one asleep ; it proves too keenly the reality of pain, that we cannot remove or alleviate, which is making itself felt even while the reason and will are sealed and powerless.

As Vernon stood watching the picture before him, and saw the deep feelings struggling on Stanley's features, and the ineffable tenderness and affection which now and then gleamed out over them, he felt how the world had wronged him, when it called him cold and apathetic ; and the dim voice which had spoken to him once before that night, when he had gazed upon the innumerable stars, of the truth which lies beneath appearances, now tried to make itself heard again ; but his was not a reflective nature, therefore the trembling whisper failed in convincing him of the importance of its message.

Finding all was still, he resolved to retire; and with a noiseless step, he sought Arthur's room, and was soon asleep.

The short summer night passed, and the pale rays of light slanted through the half-opened shutters, and found Stanley still beside his father. The fresh, cool morning air breathed into the room, and cast almost a chill upon him, for that is the hour when the wearied watcher always feels most conscious of his want of rest; but Arthur was not sensible of fatigue: his eye still rested with the quenchless earnestness of affection upon his father's countenance; the flush and suffusion which had been there seemed diminished, the brow was cool, and the convulsive workings of the hands were over. The old man lay calm and still, his breathing so gentle, that Stanley sometimes leant over him, to listen if it had not ceased. Every hour of this tranquil rest seemed like days saved from the grave; Arthur shrunk from even the twitter of the birds in the trees, or the rustling of the leaves, fearing they should disturb his father's slumbers; but at last the



spell of sleep dissolved itself, and Mr. Stanley opened his eyes; they met the deep, speaking ones of his son, and after murmuring a few inarticulate sounds, he closed them again; but that look was one of restored consciousness, of recognition, and renewed the nearly extinct hope in Arthur's heart. He gently drew the curtain before the window, to exclude the sun's brightness, for Mr. Stanley seemed again composing himself to sleep. At this moment, the old housekeeper appeared, anxious to hear how her master had passed the night; she scarcely liked this continued drowsiness, which to Stanley's inexperience had seemed so favourable a sign, but refrained from giving her opinion, as the doctors were expected soon. She prevailed upon Arthur to resign his post to her for a short time, that he might refresh himself; to please her, he left the room, and went to Vernon, whom he found up, and on the point of coming to him. After hearing how things were, he exclaimed:

“How pale and fagged you do look, my

dear fellow ! Do lie down, and get half an hour's sleep. You have much to go through yet, and must take care of yourself."

" I could not sleep if I did, and the doctors will soon be here ; I must see them, so I will just freshen up a little, and then I shall be all right. I don't believe I have washed off the dust of my journey from Sherington, yesterday."

So saying, Arthur plunged his head into a basin of water ; which operation had a decided invigorating effect upon him, and after a slight alteration in his toilette, he accompanied Captain Vernon to the library, where they found breakfast ; before they had finished, the medical attendants were announced. After hearing Arthur's account of his father, at which they looked rather grave, they went up stairs and saw the patient, had their consultation, and again adjourned to the library, where Arthur endeavoured to learn their opinion of the case ; but either from their fear of painig him, or from the difficulty of forming a decisive opinion, they would only admit the danger that Mr.

Stanley was in, yet expressed the chance of his rallying. There was nothing to be done, therefore the physician who had come from a distance, leaving an urgent case was compelled to depart, notwithstanding Arthur's earnest entreaties for him to remain, and leave the patient in the hands of the country practitioner, who, to do him justice, was a clever and judicious man. As Vernon found he could do nothing, he determined to go to Fountain Court, and tell Adeline his intelligence; and promising to return to Langston in the course of the day, he took leave of Stanley.

It was a long, sad day, for poor Mr. Stanley still remained in the same state, only appearing to grow feebler every hour; Arthur never left his side, except to write a few lines to Marion, to tell her how he was situated, and how impossible it would be for him to see her for the present, and to beg her not to be uneasy about him, should she not hear for some days; he knew she would have no feelings of being neglected, no foolish resentment if he did not

write, for her love would make ready excuses and afford good reasons for anything he might do, or leave undone. In that darkened room, he sat and mused over his past life, its objects, motives and results; and with the dark shadows of death stealing near, felt how insignificant earth's brightest gauds were, compared to the importance of the inner and spiritual world.

It is a mysterious and solemn thing to watch the last energies of life ebb away, to feel the pulse gradually slacken, and to know that the principle of being, which is so inscrutably wonderful, is being absorbed into eternity. We may talk as we like of life, we may reason of it logically, we may define it, as we think, accurately, yet, after all, is not its essence completely unknown to us, utterly indescribable by us? Life—death—be they what they may—they are to us the most inconceivably momentous realities; and thus every man will, must feel, at some period of his existence; happy is it for those who recognise them as such, before their mortal career be near its close! When

love and sorrow mingle together as they do, is it not a foreshadowing of life and death? For love is the primal energy, the heavenly spark—the life of the heart and soul; while sorrow, with its stern lessons and purifying influences, does it not lead us, even like the cold hand of death, into higher experiences and a more exalted state of being? Is not love, like life, composed of a thousand sensations? does it not contain impulses and energies, which incite us to action, which prepare us for a fuller, a more comprehensive state? And as no man can become truly great, as no spirit can work out its own powers until it has passed through the storm-waves of sorrow, so no soul can awake to the rich glories of eternity, until it emerge from the region of death.

These thoughts, and many more, passed through Stanley's mind as he sat beside his father; he had experienced them before, but never so forcibly as now, for he had always been in the field of action; and if sorrow had come, it had not been deep, he had banished

it by exertion, it had never altered his aims and purposes ; it had come like a flash of lightning across his horizon, but had never invaded the citadel of his heart, flooding all within with its bitter waters ; he had not been baptized in them, he had not yet fought the stern, spiritual battle of grief.

The day was passing on ; that long, sultry, summer day, when the sun had been pouring its beams upon thirsty Nature, until she lay fainting before its ardent gaze, waiting for the return of the cool breeze of evening. At last the long shadows crept over the lawn, as the sun sank low in the west. Arthur went to the open window to breathe the air more freely ; when he returned to his father's side, he found him awake, and something of his former intelligence in his eye. He bent over him and kissed him, whispering, "You are better, dearest father, you know me now ; how long you have slept !"

To Arthur's unfeigned delight Mr. Stanley answered, feebly, it is true, but still articulately :

“Be not deceived, my dear boy, I feel I cannot last long; thank you for all your care and kindness.”

Arthur rang that the doctor might be summoned; he came, and after giving what medicines he thought necessary, he followed Stanley into the dressing-room, and told him that in all human probability his father could not survive many hours; that medical skill could no longer avail, for much pain was not to be anticipated. With an intuitive feeling that the young man would prefer being alone at this moment, the doctor turned and left the room. After a few minutes' hesitation, Arthur returned to his father and sat speechless beside him, with his eyes fixed upon him; Mr. Stanley read in their mournful gaze, that he was not wrong in his conviction that his life was nearly over.

“Arthur, open the shutter, let me see the sunshine once more, I never expect it will rise again for me; tell me, my dear boy, is not this what the doctor has just announced to you?”

Arthur drew back the curtains, so that his father could see the sky tinted with the glowing clouds, but he could not trust his voice to utter the confirmation of Mr. Stanley's feelings, but he admitted it when he said :

“Is there anything you wish to have done, dear father? your slightest wish is a law to me !”

“No, Arthur, I have nothing to trouble me in this world ; send for our good rector at once, for I am strong now, but this will not last long.”

The old clergyman quickly obeyed the summons, and knelt beside his dying friend, and administered the last solemn rite of the Christian's communion with his fellows, before he goes to the unseen world. It was a touching picture in that dimly lighted room, to see the fine countenance of Mr. Stanley, with the impress of death already upon it, but with the fervent spirit still illumining it ; the pale, yet passion-stirred features of the young man near him ; and the venerable, meek minister, breathing the inspired words of faith and resignation ;



and at a little distance, two affectionate old servants, who could not restrain their audible grief at the prospect of losing their good master. At last, the father and son were left alone together—unspeakably solemn moments ! the *last* before they were parted for ever in this world. Their pleasant intercourse was to be interrupted, and one, at least, would be a sufferer by the dispensation ; for, let people write and talk as they may about the consolations of a death-bed, there is a heart-piercing grief in seeing the earthly ties of love about to be severed and dissolved.

“Tell me, dearest father, you forgive me any pain I have caused you. You know I have loved you, but I have often been cold and careless, and now feel as if I could love you so much better, if you would stay with me still.”

“Nay, I have nothing to forgive you ; you have been a good son to me, and my last prayers are for your happiness. You will not forsake this old house, Arthur, for I have loved it dearly, but come here sometimes ; and when

you bring Marion as your wife to it, then remember those who were here before you, and in your happiness, reflect that you must one day be as I am now, when all things are as nothing in comparison to having fought ‘the good fight of faith.’ It is hard to part with you, my boy ; but God’s will be done. He is taking me in His own good time, and, I trust, to Himself ; may He for ever bless and keep you, in all trials and temptations. Now, kiss me once more.”

Arthur pressed his lips to his father’s, which were already chill, and supporting his head on his shoulder, wiping off the death dews which rose, and watching with awe, the last moments approach. Both were silent, for what words could express their feelings ? At last Mr. Stanley whispered :

“Don’t leave me, Arthur ; I cannot see you any longer.”

“I am here, father ; I will never leave you,” chokingly answered Stanley, as he pressed the feeble hand in his own.

“God bless you again ! and, O God ! have

mercy on us, in all time of our tribulation, in the hour of death—”

“ Good Lord deliver us !” ejaculated Arthur, for his father’s voice failed ; but at those often repeated words, he looked up, and in that last effort expired. Yes, his spirit had departed, and the cold, grey hues of death rested upon his brow, where a calm, peaceful expression yet remained. Arthur gently moved his arm away, and reverently laid the senseless head upon the pillow, and when he pressed a kiss upon the unconscious lips, the burning tears rushed to his eyes, and the strong man flung his arms upon the bed, and, burying his face in them, resigned himself to the first impulse of grief.

Bitter are the tears wrung from the stern composure of manhood ; they gush on like a fiery tornado, carrying all barriers before them. Some time elapsed before Arthur raised his head with restored calmness, and saw the lamp burning low ; and as the still tranquillity which reigned around, penetrated his soul, he felt as if his late passion of sorrow were almost a desecra-

tion of the sacred silence of the dead. He sat and watched through the night hours, and when the morning light dawned, he closed the shutters and resigned his office to the faithful, weeping housekeeper. Absolutely exhausted by the excitement and fatigue of the last two nights, he threw himself upon his bed, and sunk into a heavy, unrefreshing slumber.

A few hours passed in oblivion, and when he opened his eyes, he found the kind sympathizing glance of Vernon upon him ; he had arrived quite early, and had waited for Stanley's awaking. With the first return of consciousness, the painful truth realized itself to his mind : oh ! those first few minutes of return to the harsh experience of realities after any calamity has befallen us ; how bitter they are. Stanley closed his eyes again, as if to shut out the facts from his mind, but his firmness and mental strength soon rallied, and with a forced calmness, he told Vernon all that had passed since he had left Langston.

## CHAPTER XIII.

It has ever been held the highest wisdom for a man not merely to submit to Necessity ;—Necessity will make him submit,—but to know and believe well that the stern thing which Necessity had ordered was the wisest, the best, the thing wanted there. I say this is the only true morality known. A man is right and invincible, virtuous, and on the road towards sure conquest, precisely while he joins himself to the great deep Law of the World ;—and surely his first chance of co-operating with it, is to know with his whole soul that it *is* ; that it is good, and alone good !

THOMAS CARLYLE. .

WITH all Vernon's friendliness and kindness, he was not very well calculated to be a companion in hours of grief, more especially to

Stanley, who, at all times, was very independent of society. Vernon soon found that he was not indispensable at Langston, and he therefore left it and its master to their solitude and reserve. To tell the truth, it was rather a relief to him to escape from such an atmosphere of gloom, where he certainly did not feel at his ease, for he disliked anything like grave and earnest thought. His anxiety to assist and cheer Stanley, however, had overcome all selfish ideas, and it was no slight proof of the interest he felt for him, when he was so ready to remain with him. Arthur greatly preferred being alone in the first day or two of his sorrow; that solemn time, when the heart can scarcely realize the full extent of its loss; when it is still feeling the agony of its experience of the fresh presence of death; when an awe and mystery pervades the darkened rooms, and the very light of heaven seems a desecration we shrink from. Marion's sympathizing letters were treasures to Stanley now: how often he read them! not a word but what he weighed and pondered; yet each time he perused them, the more fully did he feel convinced of the

entire sincerity of their writer. He pictured her in the home of his fathers—the solace and ministering angel of his future life ; calming and softening him—leading him on to the true and the good. There is no such beneficial influence for the ardent energies of such a nature as Stanley's, as that of a pure disinterested affection, for it has a touch of the heavenly, and purifies his ambition and eager impulses for action and success. All the rooms she had been in had tender associations and images for him, and added to the attachment he had always felt for Langston. Now that his father had departed, the place had yet additional claims upon his regard, for we always have deep feelings for the scene where one we have loved has breathed his last ; it seems as if the most distinct memories were connected with the spot where the last embrace, the last look were given.

Knowing that his father had appointed Murray one of his executors, Stanley wrote to him to tell him so, and to beg him to come to Langston without delay. There was nothing to

be learned from the will, for Arthur had long been acquainted with its contents; with the exception of legacies to the servants and to a few friends, and a thousand pounds to Murray as executor, Arthur inherited everything. A codicil which gave his miniature to Marion touched Stanley, for it showed that his father had thought of his promised wife with affection. The day before that appointed for the funeral, Stanley and Murray were in the library, looking over papers, arranging or destroying them, when Murray exclaimed.

“What is this, Stanley? I do not understand it; something about your poor father’s being concerned in the Bank at Rivington. Why, my dear fellow, it makes him responsible to an enormous extent. I never heard anything about it—were you aware of this?”

“Yes, about a year or eighteen months ago, he told me he had consented to allow his name to appear in the list of directors. I told him then, that I thought it was a great pity, but he seemed resolved upon it, and you know I never



liked to interfere in his affairs. I remember being very much annoyed at the time, but have never thought much of it since. Let me look at that memorandum."

"You must see about this at once, and withdraw your capital; for these provincial banks one can never answer for; remedy the evil immediately before any mischief arises."

"I ought to send to the directors as soon as possible, or they will be inconvenienced by the withdrawal of so large a sum. I will finish looking over these letters, and then I will write. What a correspondence my poor father must have had. Look, the drawers in this bureau are full. They seem to be letters from my mother before they were married. I will destroy them, for I would not read them on any account: things which were sacred during a person's life, become doubly so when death bequeaths them to our honour."

"But, indeed, Stanley, your note to the bank directors is of far more consequence than finishing those papers; it won't take five minutes to

write ; you cannot think how nervous I am about the thing. I cannot imagine how you could have rested without inducing your father to change his plans ; but you were always the most indifferent being in the world about money. I dare say some of your proud, independent ideas prevented your representing the matter to Mr. Stanley in its true light, and you may think yourself fortunate that no evil has arisen, but you are running risk constantly ; the bank at Orton broke the other day, and one never knows how these things influence others. I shall never cease plaguing you until this is settled, for I feel as if it were imperatively necessary.”

“ Well, I never like to oppose you when you are resolute, for you take that fit so seldom, that I always look upon your determination as a kind of presentiment ; therefore, I will obey your commands.”

Stanley took a pen, and after writing a few lines, gave the note to Murray, who quite coincided with it ; as Stanley was sealing it, he asked Murray to ring, that it might be sent at

once ; to their surprise, no one came, but after a second summons, Watson, the old butler appeared. Stanley, who was sitting with his back to the door, did not look round, but on hearing some one enter, merely desired his letter should be forwarded ; however, Murray turned from the window to give some directions about his horse, and after a glance to the servant's face, exclaimed :

“ What on earth has happened to you, Watson ? you look completely scared ! ”

This attracted Arthur's attention, and starting from his desk, he too was struck with the astonished and frightened expression of the man's features.

“ I hope you have heard nothing unfortunate ? ” [he asked in a kind voice. “ Can I do anything for you ? ”

“ Oh ! Sir, what do you think ? Coachman has just come in from Rivington, and the whole place is in an uproar, for the bank has stopped payment, and all the people are ruined, only fancy ! Who could have thought of anything wrong there ? we all thought it was

as good as the Bank of England ; and all my money that I had saved was there, and the housekeeper's too ; and think of the poor people at Rivington, Sir, is it not shocking ?”

Arthur made no reply for a few minutes, and then turned abruptly to Murray, saying :

“Of course this note is useless now ; what ruin this will involve !” Then he added to Watson : “This is indeed sad news, I am very sorry for you all ; we must see what can be done. I shall not want to send the groom out now.”

Neither Stanley or Murray spoke for some time, both were too much surprised and disturbed for words. Murray stood at the window, as if avoiding to look at his friend, who still went on with his employment at the bureau. At last he joined Murray, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said :

“Now the question is, what is to be *done* ? I must know the extent of this failure, and all particulars ; I suppose I am involved very considerably. What is your advice ? I cannot

have business here now, or I would write and have one of the clerks here at once, but until after the funeral, I could not bear it. Would you drive over to Rivington, and see the directors for me? I will write a line to them and say you are empowered to act for me."

"Certainly, my dear fellow, anything in the world for you, and this seems to be the best plan; order round the light carriage, and I shall soon get back. I know how you hate suspense, but you must not expect anything to be settled at once. I will learn all I can for you, and then you must consider what you will do. I will fetch my hat while you write, and then I can see about expediting the coachman."

When Murray came in for the note, he said :

"It strikes me, that you will not be answerable for anything; your father was not alive when this happened; I do not believe that, in strict law, you need come forward."

"But in strict honour, Murray? And my

father's honour, that shall be inviolate, at any sacrifice ; pray remember that in all you say. Don't be away longer than you can help."

Stanley took up the memorandum again, which referred to his father's connexion with the bank—nothing could be clearer than the responsibility he had taken upon himself, and no reserving clause, no limits seemed to have been named for this responsibility. Arthur shrank from the prospect before him, but he endeavoured not to think of it until he should see Murray, for he could not form any definite ideas of what would be required of him, and it was useless torture to picture things darker than he might find them. He strove to remember that, as this misfortune was not caused by his own fault or folly, he must calmly acquiesce in it ; he endeavoured to nerve his mind to obedience to whatever might be required of him to bear.

In this hour of perplexity, he went to his father's room, and as he gazed upon the immovable tranquillity and peaceful repose of the

dead, he felt that a time comes to all when the greatest prizes or the deepest reverses which the world's chalice can press to our lips, are absolutely nothing, and it is only the use we have made of them which signifies at all ; the moral discipline which we have extracted from our opportunities, is all the enduring influence that they possess.

What mattered it to the cold form before him, that he lay in the time-honoured mansion of his family, that he was surrounded by all that wealth could afford or position exact, that the blazoned escutcheon would be raised over his tomb, and all

“ The boast of heraldry, and pomp of power,”

follow him to his last, long home? All this availed nothing in the pathway to the grave, and this truth penetrated deeply into Stanley's heart ; and he felt strength and resolution arise from this silent reflection in the chamber of death.

There was a source of consolation that this

catastrophe had been spared his father ; that he had died unconscious of the unfortunate result of his too ready acquiescence with the importunities of others ; for he well knew how bitterly he would have reproached himself for depriving his son of what he had a right to expect from him. In the firm endurance of his own spirit, Arthur rejoiced that he alone would suffer, for he felt he could do that and yet conquer ; but if he had been compelled to have seen his father's annoyance, how much more severe would have been the trial.

It was evening before Murray returned. As he entered the library, his face wore a grave and anxious expression, which convinced Stanley that he had no pleasant intelligence to communicate. He lost no time in relating all he knew on the all-important subject, for notwithstanding Arthur's well-maintained composure, Murray well knew how anxious he must be. He commenced saying :

“ You can form no conception of the state of excitement and confusion, which the directors’



announcement of their inability to pay has caused in Rivington ! Almost every one has lost much, and bitter are the curses of the sufferers upon the authors of their misfortunes. It seems that two of the partners have been speculating to a great extent in railways, and now the crash has come ! Your father's name and credit have been invaluable to them. No wonder old Ford was so anxious for him to join them, it gave them such support in their difficulties. I saw one of the partners, and the head clerk, and find they do not expect to pay more than nine shillings in the pound ; they are reckoning up their means and securities, and among other large amounts, they have named your father's liabilities at somewhere about sixty thousand pounds."

Arthur's brow grew dark at the mention of this sum, for he knew he was not in possession of it ; he made no reply, and Murray continued :

" It is a most awkward business. I do not know what advice to offer ; it seems your poor

father had placed himself completely in the hands of these people, and most shamefully have they abused their power, for his name is pledged to the public as a guarantee for their safety ; and although perhaps you are not strictly bound to adhere to their demands, yet your denying them would give rise to reports, and slighting remarks upon Mr. Stanley's character."

"That shall never be, Murray, if I give up my last guinea. No blame shall rest on his name, let it cost what it may. I never cared about money ; I can work for myself, and will, like any slave, before they shall dare to breathe anything against the honour of a man they were not fit to speak to—rascally knaves ! imposing upon such unsuspecting generosity ! Of course, many others are involved in this general break-up ?"

"The distress is almost universal, for almost all the tradespeople had some money in this bank ; and although perhaps each individual sum was not very large, yet it was of the

utmost importance to its owner, who is now calling for redress as loudly as he blames the recklessness or fraud of the directors. Some heart-rending cases have occurred in Rivington, where families have lost their all, and do not know what to do for subsistence."

"But you do not mean to say that they have speculated to such a frightful extent, that if I, one person out of many others, pay sixty thousand pounds, they will not be able to meet their difficulties?"

"Of course, I cannot tell you very correctly, as I could not stay to examine the accounts; but they have gambled in those confounded railways most fearfully, yet with such a sum as they seem to be able to prove that your father had made himself answerable for, they must be able to satisfy many of the claims made upon them."

"This is so totally unexpected, that I feel completely bewildered, so that I cannot think steadily. I can see you would almost advise

me to demur about agreeing to their demands ; but if my father's honour be involved, I repeat I will meet them on any terms."

"But, are you not straining your honour to a very refined point? Remember how they have acted towards Mr. Stanley ; surely, they do not merit any great consideration."

"I am not thinking of them ; but let them be the veriest rogues unhung, that cannot alter my position : obligations must be fulfilled, let them be contracted with whom they may ; and nothing shall induce me to act otherwise than, I am sure, my father would have done ; he would have met his difficulties with the very spirit of honour rather than with the letter of the law. The thing is to decide, from whence is this money to be had ? My father has left about twenty thousand pounds in the funds, not more ; what I have invested there on my own account would be but as a drop in the ocean ; however, that must go, of course."

Murray looked earnestly at Stanley, for he felt how noble was his determination ; but there

was sadness as well as admiration in his glance, for he felt if his friend adhered to his resolution, the worst consequences of it were yet to come.

He replied :

“Twenty thousand pounds is a large sum to surrender in this way ; but it is not more than a third of what is demanded of you. I can see but one alternative for you, and that I dread to mention.”

“Nonsense, Edward, give me your unrestrained advice ; I am no coward ; I can bear more than you imagine.”

“The only possible plan I can devise is, that you sell Langston.”

Strange as it may seem, the possibility of this had not occurred to Stanley : mere money he would have sacrificed without hesitation, but Langston seemed so completely a part of himself, that he would almost as soon have thought of selling his head ; yet the iron hands of grim Necessity encompassed him, so that this must be done, and nothing else. He

started from his chair, and paced the room with hasty, unequal steps, and then exclaimed :

“It must not be, Murray, I cannot give up Langston, it seems a sacrilege to think of it ; not an acre has been sold since my family have had the estate, and that has been for several generations.”

Arthur took another rapid turn or two, and then returned to the table, saying :

“Yet what is to be done ? I can find no loophole of escape, no expedient suggests itself. It must be done ; yet the idea of parting with the place is bitterness itself.”

“Pause, then, before you determine upon agreeing to these terms ; perhaps a compromise might be effected. Yet then you will not fancy your honour is free.”

“Then there shall be no pause, no hesitation,” interrupted Stanley, almost fiercely. “Forgive me, Murray, for my impetuosity,” he added, “but this has completely unmanned me. I never thought of losing Langston ; all my hopes and plans for the future were connected

with it. Marion, too, was so fond of it; what will she say? What a different prospect mine is now! Don't you see, Murray, I am absolutely *ruined*—all must go—my dearest hopes are vanished. I have only my professional income now to call my own, and perhaps even the sacrifice of Langston will not defray all demands upon me, and I shall be hampered for years. But I will not doubt about my plans. All shall be sold, and that sixty thousand pounds paid; will you let those directors know my determination? for after the painful duties of to-morrow are over, I must go to town. I must see Marion about this; I cannot write, and some one else will be telling her of it. She shall hear my doom from my own lips. Good-night, Murray, I cannot thank you for your kindness."

Arthur paused as he passed the room where his father lay. He hesitated before he could enter it, but he conquered his reluctance; and as he took his last look of the loved features, and thought that the house he

had cherished so fondly would soon belong to strangers, his emotions almost choked him. He stooped and kissed the cold brow, and dashing aside a few scalding tears, he went to his own room, to compose his thoughts, which had been so agitated and disturbed that day.



## CHAPTER XIV.

The setting of a great hope, is like the setting of the sun.

LONGFELLOW.

The spider's most attenuated thread  
To cord, is cable, to man's tender tie  
On earthly bliss, it breaks at every breeze.

YOUNG.

WHEN Arthur followed his father's corpse out of the park gates, a sense of desolation crept over him, for he thought that now all that really belonged to him had been removed from his old home, soon to be his no longer. The tenantry voluntarily attended the funeral, for Mr. Stanley had been a good landlord to them,

and sincere were the tears and regrets given to his memory. The old clergyman, who had been a friend of Mr. Stanley's since they were at College together, met the sorrowful procession. When he began the inspired words of the sublime burial service, his voice was low and faltering, but the holy influence of the words he uttered strengthened him, and it was with a firm intonation that he breathed the inspired words of the patriarch: "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Arthur stood at the head of the corpse, as chief mourner, but his face was hidden in the folds of his cloak, and it was only by an almost imperceptible shudder that any one could guess his emotion. When the coffin was about to be lowered into the vault, he laid his hand on it for an instant, and as in so doing the covering fell from his features, even Murray started to see their paleness, and the convulsive trembling of his lips. The prayers had been read, and the last words of blessing spoken, and then the melancholy group separated. Many neighbouring gentlemen had testified their re-

spect for Mr. Stanley by attending on this solemn occasion, and now returned to their homes; for although Murray begged them to take refreshments at Langston, none were willing to intrude upon Stanley, who had left the church without speaking to any one. Late that afternoon he prepared for going to town, and joined Murray in the library, to take leave of him, saying:

“I shall not be away more than two days, unless anything very unforeseen happens, as I shall be anxious to arrange matters here. I shall find you here on my return, I hope, and pray let those directors know my determination.”

“Vernon begged me this morning to tell you, that if he could be of the slightest use in any way, he hoped you would not hesitate to let him know. He was very much inclined to come back with me, but I thought you would prefer being alone.”

“You were quite right; I am most unsociable just now. You do not mind my indulging in solitude, I know, so I make no

apologies. Can I do anything for you in town?"

"No, thank you, unless if you happen to pass the club, you will inquire if there are any letters for me, and remember me to the Harcourts."

"Then good-by. I shall know the full extent of my fate before I see you again."

After Stanley had departed, Murray pondered over his last words, endeavouring to divine their meaning; it was evident they had some reference to Marion, and at last he decided that Stanley must be again actuated by his doubts and suspicions, that he fancied Marion would not be true to him on account of the change in his position. "Poor fellow," thought Murray, "he does not want the dread of that in addition to his other troubles; I know he is torturing himself with a thousand misgivings." This conjecture was only true in part; Arthur was wretched enough, but it was not because he believed Marion's love depended on his fortune, he could not have wronged her so deeply; but with his present prospects, he felt he had no right to ask

her to continue their engagement. He had thought earnestly and seriously upon his new position, and knowing that it would be only by arduous exertion that he could ensure the possession of any income, and even that might be subject to embarrassing claims, he felt he had no chance, for a few years at least, of offering Marion a home, and even then how different it would be from the one he had expected to give her. Could he have foreseen this change, nothing would have induced him to have sought her affection, or to have thought of making her his proposals. But now, this was all done, and he loved her more deeply than he could express, yet he must give her up, she should not be involved in his distress; but it was a bitter sorrow to think of resigning his claims, he shrunk from the idea; should he not trust to time, to circumstances to improve his prospects, and not hint the possibility of giving her up? Wearied in mind and body, he reached his chambers in the Temple, and abandoned himself to gloomy forebodings of the morrow.

Instead of the happiness which the thought of meeting Marion had always inspired, the coming interview promised unutterable pain and distress. He thought of writing to tell her of his being in town, and to prepare her a little for what he had to acquaint her with ; but when he took up the pen, he could not express the conflicting feelings which were agitating him. He read the letter he had received that morning, dwelt on its expressions of affection, and shuddered to think he should receive them no longer. The distress and misery of that night cannot be expressed ; the future, which had glowed in such bright hues, now seemed obscure and dim ; the memory of the last few months was so dear, that he could not bear to think it was all that he should have left of the dreams and the hopes he had cherished, and yet this was all that he could flatter himself would remain. The question which arises in human hearts—what have I done to deserve this sorrow? recurred again and again to Stanley, as he tossed restlessly upon his bed ; it was so bitter to drink the cup of disappointment, that he sought earnestly to

turn it aside, but a stronger hand than his pressed it to his lips, and its waters overflowed his soul. What have I done, to deserve this ? The rebellious questioning of our pride, alone proves that we deserve a chastening hand over us ; when we have learnt the great duty of perfect submission to what is inevitable, then only can we see the right relation of things ; then we shall understand the fierce battle which is always waging between good and evil, the two antagonistic principles of the world ; and we shall follow the good for its own sake, because it is pure and holy, and not shrink from it on account of the thorns which wound us, when we grasp it ; and we shall avoid evil from its inherent degradation and deathly influence, although the surface be glittering in the brilliant hues which sometimes gather over corruption.

Poor Stanley was struggling against what was imposed upon him by a higher power than his own, but not to the disregard of noble and lofty principles. He had resolved to sacrifice his love to his duty ; but the tenderest and

holiest feelings of his heart were lacerated and bleeding from his determination. Love to him was not a beautiful dream only, a sweet, softening influence, the recreation of existence; but it was a truth, which was woven in every fibre of his being, which was to endure, not only through time, but through eternity; he felt it had exalted and purified him, and he recoiled from the necessity of renouncing this passion, of laying aside this influence, this reality, and being obliged to accept sorrow, which is the other reality of life, as his companion through his pilgrimage.

“It is the gift of sorrow to be pure.”

But before this refinement of earthly passions be achieved, the soul must have been steeped in its chilling waters, it must have learned its stern lessons, and at last have owned their beneficial effect, and felt that it was right it should have passed through the ordeal of suffering.

Murray thought anxiously of Stanley, as he



sat alone at Langston : he guessed some of the emotions which would be agitating him, and sighed for the changed fortunes of his friend. He was dissatisfied with himself, restless, and discontented ; for he felt that he could not have acted as Stanley had done ; and there is no such weary heart-sickness as that which arises from the consciousness of our own moral weakness and unworthiness ; when we have the power of discriminating what is right and good, which is the path of rectitude and honour, and yet are destitute of the courage and energy to follow our convictions. I am not speaking of the sharp pangs of self-reproach which at some time or other will visit even the most flagrant offenders, but of those who progress tolerably well in the battle of life in the sight of men, who generally keep on the side of virtue, who have their consciences sufficiently tender to feel their duty, and yet who content themselves with only such a bare performance of it as will preserve them from censure, who weigh the comfort and rewards of well doing, and the sufferings of sin ; and from their comparative

value, determine their course. When such a man sees, as he sometimes may, another, who judges by quite a different standard, who lays aside the circumstances and contingencies which surround good and evil, and chooses the good for its own sake ; if he have the power to appreciate such conduct, he will feel self-abased, humbled by the contrast with himself. This was the case with Murray : he could acknowledge Stanley's worth, his very soul honoured him, but he shrank from contemplating the wide gulf between them ; however, he did not seek deeply into the causes of this difference ; that it existed, he knew, but he concluded it was from their different qualities and organization, and that he could never be otherwise. Anxious to assist Stanley, he wrote to the directors, and informed them of his resolution, and he begged them to have their affairs arranged as soon as possible, as his friend would act with all possible promptitude. He then walked through the rooms, and examined the paintings, endeavouring to form some idea of their marketable value ; but, although

they were undoubtedly fine pictures, Murray was well aware of the sacrifice at which such articles of taste are generally disposed of.

He made memoranda of the books, and in fact did all in his power to facilitate the disagreeable task Stanley would have before the sale, and to save him from annoyance.

In the midst of this, Vernon rode up to the door: he knew Murray was alone, and was anxious to hear how things were going on. When he saw how he was employed, he exclaimed :

“ Has Stanley absolutely determined to sacrifice this place? He has not taken long for deliberation on such an important question. I thought he was so fond of Langston ?”

“ So he was, and still is ; but his father’s honour is far dearer, and he would not hesitate, although it is a most bitter disappointment. I pity him most sincerely ; and yet, Vernon, I have been thinking this morning, that Arthur is above our pity ; although he is in such painful circumstances, I feel pity is not for him.

I admire, and almost envy his resolution and self-denial—one cannot compassionate a conqueror, even although he be a sufferer.”

“ You know I never can comprehend all your fine drawn metaphysics, Murray. To my taste, Stanley is very much to be pitied ; fancy losing such a property as this, and for such rogues as those directors must be. He does not know what he is going to do ; when the place is irreparably gone, he will repent this determination.”

“ Never ; if I know him, he is not one to half-do a thing ; if he thinks what he has resolved upon is right and necessary, there will be no after thoughts of wavering regret—that it will cost him many bitter feelings to part with Langston, I am sure ; but this is not doubt or hesitation about carrying out his plans ; you will see there will be no time lost in making arrangements for the sale. I expect him back in a couple of days, and then everything will be pushed on with rapidity.”

“ He is so confoundedly proud, that one

dares not offer to accommodate him in any way, or I would have advanced part of the money on a mortgage, and I dare say some one else would have come forward; but I would not venture to name such a thing to him."

"He would not have accepted it, for I know he has a great horror of all temporary expedients, he thoroughly completes what he undertakes; but it is a cruel thing to be compelled to give up such an estate, and one too, that has been in his family so long; no one can tell how acutely Stanley feels this, for he is so stern and reserved."

"Every one is talking of this; never was anything so completely unexpected. Stanley does not get the same sympathy that would be showered on many, for he has never taken the trouble to make himself popular; and although his conduct must command the highest esteem and respect, yet people think he is indifferent to their opinion, and careless of their sympathy, and call him cold-hearted and destitute of feeling."

“ I know they do, but they wrong him ; however, such a character as his<sup>3</sup> must always be misunderstood, very few can comprehend or do justice to such complete self-command ; even you sometimes seem to fall into the popular error about him, although you have known him so long.”

“ Nay, I always give him credit for all that is noble and high-minded ; it is true that Adeline calls him a stone, an icicle, and all kinds of hard, impenetrable things, but when she once takes a prejudice against any one, it is difficult to make her give it up, and I believe some of his bitter, sarcastic speeches offended her in olden days.”

“ Will not his affection for Miss Harcourt have any influence upon Mrs. Vernon ? She cannot doubt the sincerity of his love for her sister. Poor fellow ! he has had some tormenting ideas about her, since this change in his fortune ; he looked wretchedness itself when he left here yesterday ; and I know his only inducement in going to town, was to explain everything to Miss Harcourt.”

“ Oh ! I suppose his old doubts of woman’s truth are haunting him ; well, if he can entertain such feelings after gaining the affections of such a girl as Marion, he deserves to be unhappy, for nothing can satisfy him, if such a heart as hers do not.”

“ I know you never had patience with his peculiar ideas on these subjects ; however, judge him leniently now, and let us hear the result of his visit to town, before we condemn him.”

“ Won’t you come back with me to Fountain Court ? We shall be alone ; it will be wretchedly dull for you in this great house, without any one to speak to ; I rode here in the hope of enticing you to accompany me home.”

“ I should like nothing better than to accept your kind offer, but I should not wish to be away in case of Stanley’s returning, and when that will be is very uncertain ; besides which, I promised to make several arrangements for him which will be neglected if I leave ; therefore, instead of a pleasant evening with you, I must finish my writing, and then console myself with a book.”

“Well, if you will not be persuaded, I must e’en leave you to your own meditations, and can only wish you pleasanter companions for the future: thank goodness, I am not reduced to such *tristesse* now; good-by, come over when you can.”

As Murray watched Vernon gallop off, his bright animated features appeared in strong contrast to the pale, determined countenance he had gazed on the day before from the same window; for Vernon was still gliding upon the dancing ripples of a prosperous tide, without thought for the future or annoyance for the present; while Stanley was in the whirlpool and gloom of sorrow. Yet Murray felt that a higher gradation of being was expressed in the earnest depths of Arthur’s dark eyes, which looked so steadily into the hidden relation of things; he knew far stronger feelings were concealed by that cold, impassive manner, and controlled by the proud curl of the lip, than existed with the frank, cordial bearing, and sparkling animation of Vernon. In his fanciful way of thinking, it seemed to him that the



superior powers of Stanley's character required a sterner discipline to perfect them, as the purest metals are subjected to the most refinement; and that Vernon's qualities, like the luxurious foliage of the tropics, would spring to their height, without any peculiar cultivation, but would, alas! like that verdure, be blighted and withered by the blast of the tempest. Murray had but little idea that Stanley would return that night, yet he found himself listening anxiously when any unexpected sound struck his ear. He fancied Arthur had decided upon some measure which would render a long visit in town unnecessary; and as he had received no hint of his intentions, a certain dread of something disagreeable and annoying, which generally attends a mystery, haunted him; therefore, when the clock struck eleven and Arthur had not arrived, he felt more comfortable about him, and retired to his room with the hope that his ambiguous words at parting had not been unpleasantly fulfilled.

## CHAPTER XV.

Oh ! guard our affection, nor e'er let it feel  
'The blight which this world o'er the warmest will steal ;  
While the faith of all round us is fading or past,  
Let ours, ever green, keep its bloom to the last.

And though, as Time gathers his clouds o'er our head,  
A shade somewhat darker o'er life they may spread,  
Transparent, at least, be the shadow they cast,  
So that Love's softened light may shine thro' to the last.

T. MOORE.

It was morning before sleep visited Stanley's eyes, on the restless, anxious night he spent in the Temple ; and it was late before he aroused himself. This rather pleased him than other-

wise, because it shortened the suspense in which he would be before he could see Marion. At last he was *en route*. It was a close, sultry morning, with the July sun pouring its fierce rays upon the dusty streets, and when he reached the park, even that looked parched and withered ; notwithstanding the heat, Arthur walked hastily, for there was that excitement in his heart which forced him on in defiance of physical inconvenience ; however, when he found himself in the square where the Harcourts' house was situated, he slackened his pace, from the dread of the coming interview, and it was then he felt how exhausted and wearied his impetuous walk had made him ; he took a turn on the shady side, and then finding himself cooler, knocked at the door without further delay.

On his inquiry for Miss Harcourt, the servant conducted him across the hall, and, opening a door, ushered him into a small room, which was especially devoted to Marion's use. The window was open, and so filled with flowers, that scarcely anything beyond it could be distinguished. Marion was here, in a loose morning

dress of pale lilac muslin, her fair ringlets as usual drooping over her face, but as she was writing, she had pushed them a little back on one side, so that the beautiful shape of her face was seen ; she was writing to Arthur, but on the door opening she looked up, and, seeing him, she flung aside the pen with an exclamation of delight. Before she knew what was passing, he had pressed her to his heart with a wild earnestness he had never shown before ; the energy of despair, the intense agony of losing her were raging in his soul as he held her in his arms. It was but for an instant, then she, gently disengaging herself, said, with a blushing cheek :

“I am so very glad to see you again, dearest ; I was just writing to you.”

She did not raise her eyes to his countenance, or she would have been startled by its expression ; he still held her hand, and murmured :

“You are the sweetest creature that ever blessed a man in this world, Marion, my own love !”

These words, uttered in passionate tones, so different to Stanley's usual calm manner, quite astonished Marion; she looked at him, and almost shrank from the strange look he bent upon her.

"What is it, Arthur? You are ill; you have been over-fatiguing and exerting yourself: sit down on the sofa," she said in almost a whisper. But instead of following her advice, he took her other hand, and with a rapid utterance said:

"Do you love me, Marion? for Heaven's sake let me hear you say so!"

Quite frightened at this conduct, she answered in that sweet, winning way peculiar to her:

"You know I do; can you doubt me? Dear Arthur, what are you thinking of this morning?"

He raised her hand to his lips, and turned away. Poor girl, she could not understand him: she sat quietly down, with surprise and the most confiding affection mingled on her countenance. He took a rapid turn across the room, and then sat beside her; he put his arm round her, and said:

“And you know how entirely, how devotedly I love you. I never loved another; you are the very light of my life, and yet, my sweetest Marion—”

She looked at him, and saw a tear in those deep, earnest eyes, the veins on his brow were starting with the agitation which was quivering in every pulse; she was now completely frightened, and hurriedly said:

“Pray tell me what you can mean, my dearest; I am perfectly bewildered!”

“Bewildered! yes, and so am I—almost mad—you must see that. I cannot speak the words which I am come here to say; pardon me, my own, my darling, for frightening you so dreadfully, but I am perfectly wretched. Tell me again that I possess your love.”

Marion could not comprehend this distress: it was not jealousy, for his tenderness was greater than ever; she tried to soothe him, and laying her hand in his, repeated:

“If you need any assurance of my affection, remember it is yours, and yours only.”

He gazed earnestly on her countenance,

which was bent down, and stooping, he pressed his lips to her flushed cheek.

“ You must not think me exacting or mistrustful, my dearest ; but if you knew how precious the confirmation of your love is to me, you would forgive me ; for you are inexpressibly dear to me. This is a most cruel business.” He started from the sofa, and turned to the window, muttering : “ It is almost more than I can bear ! ”

When he turned, he saw Marion’s head was bowed upon her hands, and feeling how he must be torturing her, he again seated himself beside her, and with unutterable tenderness, whispered :

“ Look up, my own ! nay, Marion, do not turn away from me, you will drive me mad : have I made you hate me ? ”

She looked up, with a sad smile, at the possibility of such a thing ; and he saw why she had concealed her features, for the tears were on her cheeks ; he kissed them away, saying :

“ Do not weep, my darling ; every tear is

agonizing me. Pray, pray, compose yourself!"

"How can I help crying when you make me so unhappy? What has happened? do tell me."

She gave him such an imploring glance, that it went to Stanley's heart; he turned away for an instant to calm the raging agitation which nearly overcame him. She evidently had not an idea of the truth; indeed how could she? She was astonished, wretched to see his sufferings, but could not divine their cause. He came and stood near her, for he did not dare to trust himself by her side; and with his features composed into an unnatural stillness, and a voice hoarse with suppressed emotions, he said:

"Although our love is so deep, although I worship you, we must part, my own Marion."

She looked at him, as if she could not understand the full import of his words; her hand was tightly pressed to her side to stop



the throbbings of her heart ; she read the deep agony in his eyes, and whispered :

“ Part—what do you mean ? ”

He could scarcely command himself any longer ; but the pale girl before him, with her lips parted, as if to catch the slightest word, seemed to make self-restraint imperative. He answered quickly :

“ I mean I must resign you—must give up hopes that were far dearer than life ; that our engagement must no longer exist ; that our paths must be separate. Can you understand me now ? ”

“ But, Arthur, *why* must this be ? if you love me, as you say you do, why make yourself and me so wretched by such words ? ”

“ Honour, good-faith, necessity compel me, Marion. I am a beggar ; I am entirely ruined ! ”

“ Is that all, dearest ? I thought it must be something much more dreadful, from what you said. ”

“ You ask me if that be all ! Is it not

enough? What can be worse? Don't you see that I must give you up? What right have I to involve you in such a fate as mine? You cannot love me, as I thought you did, or you would not think anything could be worse than our parting."

"But, Arthur, I do not see any necessity for this parting; such love as ours cannot depend upon fortune. I gave my faith to Arthur Stanley, not to his estate. You are here, and I am unchanged."

"My sweetest, noblest girl, you do not understand what ruin is. I have no home to offer you now—no hope that I shall have for years; how then can I retain your promise, and condemn you to interest yourself in the anxieties which will be my lot for the future, with only a faint hope in the dim distance?"

"Dearest Arthur, sit down here, and listen to me," said she, holding out her hand, "before you pronounce our fate so decisively. Have we not loved each other more than anything else in this world? Do you think such a love is to

be rooted up and forgotten, because your position may change?"

"My own dearest, do not tempt me against my principles; you little know how I have suffered before I could determine to resign you!"

"And am not I to have a single word to say about my own disposal?" asked Marion, with an attempt at a smile; "are you to have the power of throwing me on one side to gratify your high-flown romance, without my will or consent? Dearest, you must not be so peremptory!"

"Marion, you cannot tell what I am enduring! I had wound myself to desperation. I had told you of our misfortunes; and your attempts at consolation are wringing my very soul!"

"Listen, Arthur, to a few words. If you have lost everything you possess, I know it is from no fault or folly of your own. You are as worthy of my love as when you were heir to thousands. I did not give you my affection for

sunshine merely ; but will share your sorrows, be they what they may ! Unless you absolutely refuse my love, it is still yours, and ever will be."

"You are an angel of goodness, my darling. I cannot tell you the unspeakable comfort you are giving me."

"To think of your making yourself so unhappy about our parting ! How could you have thought of it ? Did you not believe what I have so often told you, that real, true affection is unchangeable ? did you think that I could forget you ?"

"You have inspired me with new energies, dearest. I feel as if nothing was insurmountable, now that I may still look forward to a future with you. If you knew all the dark, miserable thoughts that have overwhelmed me the last two or three days, you might a little understand the inexpressible relief it is to hear your determination."

"Poor Arthur ! and I never knew anything about it ; but now all will be better. You

must let me help you to bear these troubles, dearest."

His answer was to press her to his heart. What ineffable feelings were throbbing within him when he embraced her, and knew that he possessed her entire affection ! He had never experienced such tenderness from her before, for she was generally calm and almost reserved ; but this barrier of restraint had been broken down by her sympathy with his distress, and every look and tone was impressed with affection ; the deep fountain of woman's love had disclosed itself, and had flowed over his harassed soul.

How fondly he gazed upon her, as she sat beside him with her hand in his, silently musing, as lovers will do, even upon less exciting occasions. At last she raised her eyes, saying :

" But now, dearest, you must tell me what all this change means, for I know nothing, except that you say you are ruined."

He then told her all the circumstances which

had occurred, and the necessity of selling Langston.

“Poor Langston !” she answered, “that is the worst part of all. However, it is inevitable, therefore you must not think of regrets ; you are ten thousand times dearer to me from your noble, honourable conduct, than if you had a hundred Langstons ! I shall be obliged to love you more than ever, dearest, to compensate for your misfortune ! And now you will have your own way to make in the world ; your position will not depend upon mere adventitious circumstances. I believe, in your heart of hearts, you often used to wish you could have concealed the fact of your being heir to such a property, that you might prove the real estimation you were held in by the world. Now you will not be fancying it is your advantages of fortune which command respect ; you will lose your doubts and suspicions.”

“I was proud and jealous then, my love ; but I am afraid this change will not cure that ; you will have to bear with me still, for I am an

exacting, grumbling being, and there are plenty of annoyances in store for me."

"They will pass away, and happy days will come. You must usurp all the business in town, and on circuit, and then we will have a pretty little cottage, and I shall be so proud of it; and we shall have such happy evenings, when you leave chambers, and come home to tell me of all your struggles and successes; and I shall love you better for your trials, than if we had everything that money can bring!"

"You are talking of inducements which would make one strive even against an opposing world, for a home, blessed by you, my own, would be a compensation for everything else; but there is much to undergo, before we arrive at such a peaceful haven. In your bright enthusiasm, and pure confidence in me, you have forgotten all the disagreeables and suspense of a long engagement. You have never thought of the opposition your parents will make to your adhering to my changed fortunes; you know nothing of the taunts, the coldness, the misery

you will experience from your persevering in your attachment. How will you bear the slights which they may show me? the sorrow of long absence, which may be imposed upon us? It would be ungenerous in me, dearest, if I did not point out the painful position your noble-heartedness will place you in."

A cloud was on Marion's brow. In her warm sympathy and strong affection for Stanley, all these blighting influences which he now brought to her notice had been utterly disregarded; she had forgotten all but themselves, and acted as if she could stand on one side, and watch his struggles, soothing and encouraging him, until he should say the victory was won. Now visions of that coldness and opposition, which are most galling to a nature like hers, were rising before her, chilling her heart with their harsh, worldly aspect. Arthur was watching the change in her countenance, and said:

"You must think of this, dear Marion, before you rashly determine to be mine still. Do not think about paining me, I can never forget the kindness, the affection you have shown me



to-day ; but I have no right to lay a shadow upon your path, which should be bright and happy."

"Nothing shall make me give you up ; no opposition whatever. It is true I had not thought of the disagreeable circumstances which may attend our engagement ; but I was not hesitating about myself, I was wondering how you would bear all the efforts which may be made to weaken our affection—you, who doubt so easily. The only hope for us is to have perfect faith in each other, so that nothing may shake our confidence, and then in time all will be well."

"I should be a wretch to mistrust you, love, after all your generous affection ; but if we are parted, that will be a cruel trial. When I can look into your dear eyes, I could never doubt you ; but you must be merciful to me, Marion, for I know how jealous and suspicious I am, and I cannot answer for myself. If I could, all would be well ; but I will try never to mistrust your love, let circumstances be what they may."

“Then we shall be independent of the reports of others, and nothing will change our feelings for each other. I believe there is such a moral power in true, earnest love, that nothing can successfully oppose it ; for is it not stronger than death, and even deeper than sorrow ? Then how can mere earthly influences injure or extinguish it ? No, believe me, Arthur, if we are true to each other, no one can eventually part us. I have strong faith in the all-conquering strength of calm, resolute will ; if we *will* that nothing shall change our love, we shall yet be happy, although we may have to endure much grief and misery first.”

“Bless you, dearest, for all the comfort you have given me ; I am ready now for anything ; we will hope even against hope. I will see you again as soon as possible ; meantime, pray write to me, your dear letters are such treasures to me, and now I shall look forward to them more anxiously than ever. I must return to Langston to-morrow morning, for I have plenty to do there ; you must not wonder if I only

write hurriedly, for I shall be overwhelmed with business."

"Never write to me when you are wearied or harassed, love ; notwithstanding the delight your letters give me, it would take away all the pleasure if I thought they troubled you ; any spare five minutes you have, you can send me a few lines to let me know how you are, and that will make me comfortable. Shall I tell my father of your position?"

"That is what I am considering. I think the most straightforward course will be, for me to meet him, and inform him of everything, and you can tell Mrs. Harcourt what has passed."

Marion bit her lip at the thought of what might be said on such an occasion. Arthur saw her hesitation, and added :

"It will be a painful task I know, but it must be done some time, and the sooner it is over the better ; let me know the result of your communication. If I call at the club at once, I may find Mr. Harcourt there ; and then if he

will accompany me to my chambers, I can soon tell him all that is necessary, and we shall know the worst that is to befall us. Whatever happens, rest assured of my entire devotion to you, my love, as I shall live in the certainty of your faith to me."

Marion unfastened a tiny seal which hung on her chain, with the device of an anchor, and the words *Fedelta e speranza*, engraved on it, and giving it to Stanley, whispered: "Use this, and may the motto be ours for ever." He pressed a kiss upon her lips, and murmuring, "May God bless and keep you always!" he hastily left the room, and was soon on his way to the club to meet Mr. Harcourt.

How different were his thoughts now to those which had agitated him a few hours before, for hope was still his, and gave him power and strength to combat all, for the prize it held before him; and he felt secure of sympathy and tenderness now, his wounded spirit revelled in this certainty, and notwithstanding all that he had still to annoy and embarrass him, there was a proud feeling in his heart, that

now he was loved for himself alone, in spite of circumstances, independently of them, as fondly as even his most exacting dreams could have pictured ; and this knowledge was so precious to his doubting mind, that he did not think loss of fortune was too heavy a price to be paid for this unutterable happiness.

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